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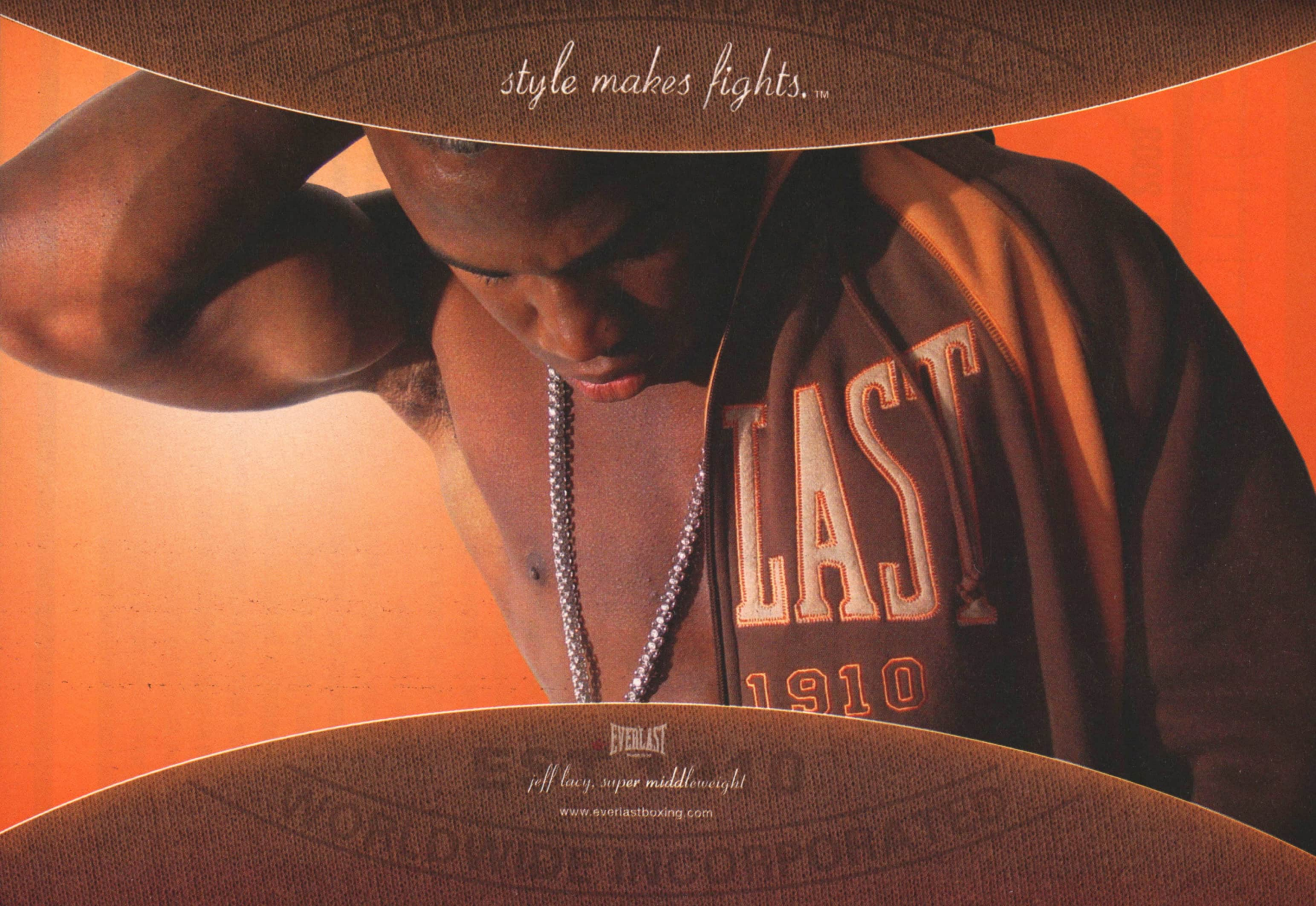
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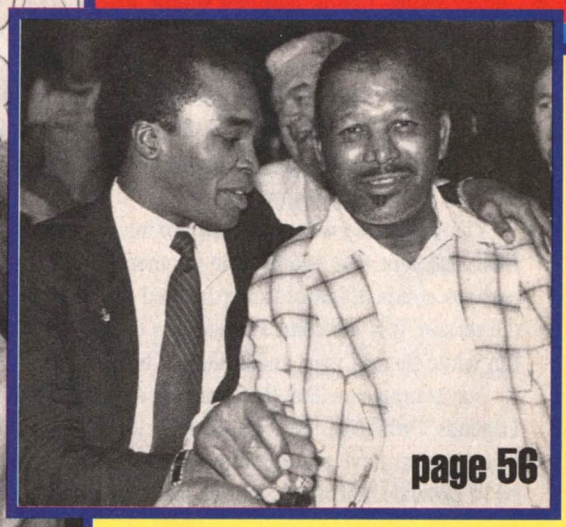

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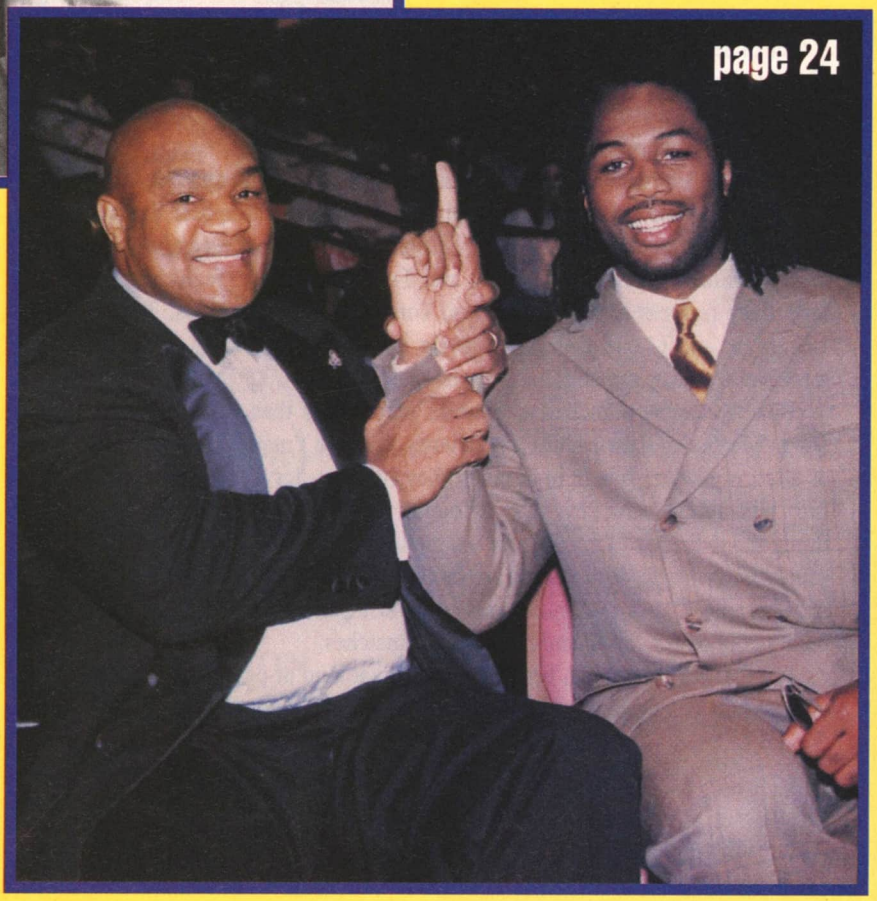

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Ask a group of boxing fans if Muhammad Ali could have beaten Mike Tyson, and two things will happen: First, the question will instantly ignite a heated debate, and second, the differences of opinion will usually run along generational lines. The younger fans will typically go with Tyson, while the older ones will support Ali. But if Grandpa is in hearing range, he'll most likely say that neither knows what the hell they're talking about, and that Joe Louis could have whipped both Ali and Tyson on the same night.

That's just the way it is with boxing junkies; they love to match heroes from different eras against one another. It seems to be an irresistible urge, perhaps a side effect of being hooked on the Sweet Science. But whatever the reason, it is the source of endless dispute and a great way to have some fun while flexing your knowledge of boxing history.

For many years THE RING carried a regular feature titled "Battle Of The Legends," which pitted stars of yesteryear in imaginary bouts. From time to time, readers have requested the return of this popular feature, so we decided to expand the concept and dedicate an entire issue of THE RING ANNUAL to fantasy fights.

The first step was to come up with 50 dream fights that would include as many of the greats from the past as possible, along with a handful of active fighters, and match them in a manner that would create maximum interest. Due to the fact that many of the fighters competed in several different divisions, we tried, wherever possible, to match them in the weight class where they were at their best.

After the editors had selected the matches, British freelance writer Gavin Evans wrote the copy, a task that included picking the winners. Evans, whose work has appeared in numerous publications, is also the author of several boxing books, including the critically acclaimed *Dancing Shoes Is Dead*, and *Wicked*, a biography of Naseem Hamed. Regardless of whether or not readers agree with Evans' conclusions, I'm sure they will appreciate his authoritative approach and lively prose.

Regular readers of THE RING will probably recognize the artwork of Bill "Cat" Miller, who created the 10 original illustrations that appear throughout the magazine. Miller, a resident of Columbus, Ohio, has recently done a series of illustrations for THE RING and THE RING EXTRA, featuring such legendary fighters as Tiger Flowers, Tony Zale, Barney Ross, Tommy Loughran, and Maxie Rosenbloom. He is currently working on several murals and putting together his first one-man show.

Boxers achieve a greater measure of immortality than athletes in other sports because of their enduring popularity. It doesn't matter if they're dead or alive, or haven't fought in decades; they still have fervent followings and fans talk about them as if they'd fought yesterday. Write one negative thing about Rocky Marciano, for example, and angry letters and e-mails (comeoutwriting@yahoo.com) arrive like clockwork. Therefore, I fully expect to hear from readers distressed about a particular favorite of theirs coming out on the losing end in one of the matches.

But that's a good thing, because without that kind of passion, magazines such as this one would not be possible. Actually, it's not just a magazine, it's a ringside seat to the greatest fights you'll never see!

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 82, No. 12 **Annual**

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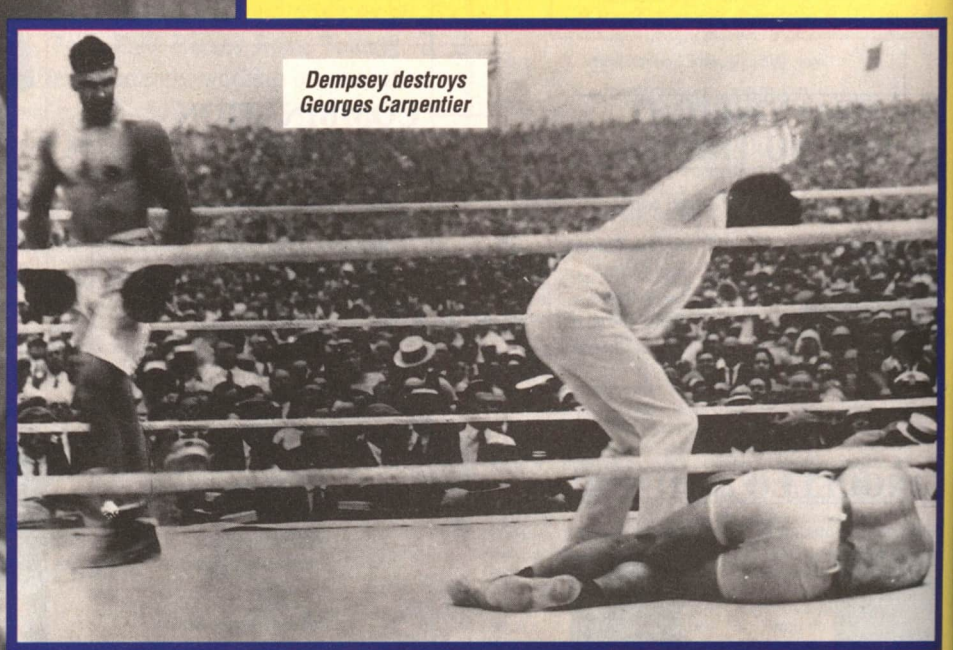
JACK DEMPSEY

Dempsey's strengths: A vicious hooker, adept at close-quarters combat, he had a huge heart and solid chin. Novelist and boxing writer Paul Gallico (who once sparred with Dempsey) said, "He had great truculence, pugnacity, and aggressiveness, a valuable, unlimited fund of natural cruelty, tremendous courage, speed, and determination. He had good, though not extraordinary, hitting powers. His protection was his aggression." Jack Sharkey—the only boxer to meet both men—declined to pick a winner, but said if held in a phone booth, Dempsey would prevail.

Dempsey's weaknesses: He struggled with movers, jabbers, and spoilers. He was stopped once and dropped six times. Four of the 14 blemishes (six losses, eight draws) on his record came against fat Willie Meehan. Tom Gibbons frustrated him for 15 rounds, Tunney won 19 of their 20 rounds, and he was reportedly trounced in sparring by Harry Greb and Tommy Loughran. He avoided some danger men by drawing the "color line" in his early years as champion, announcing he'd "pay no attention to Negro challengers."

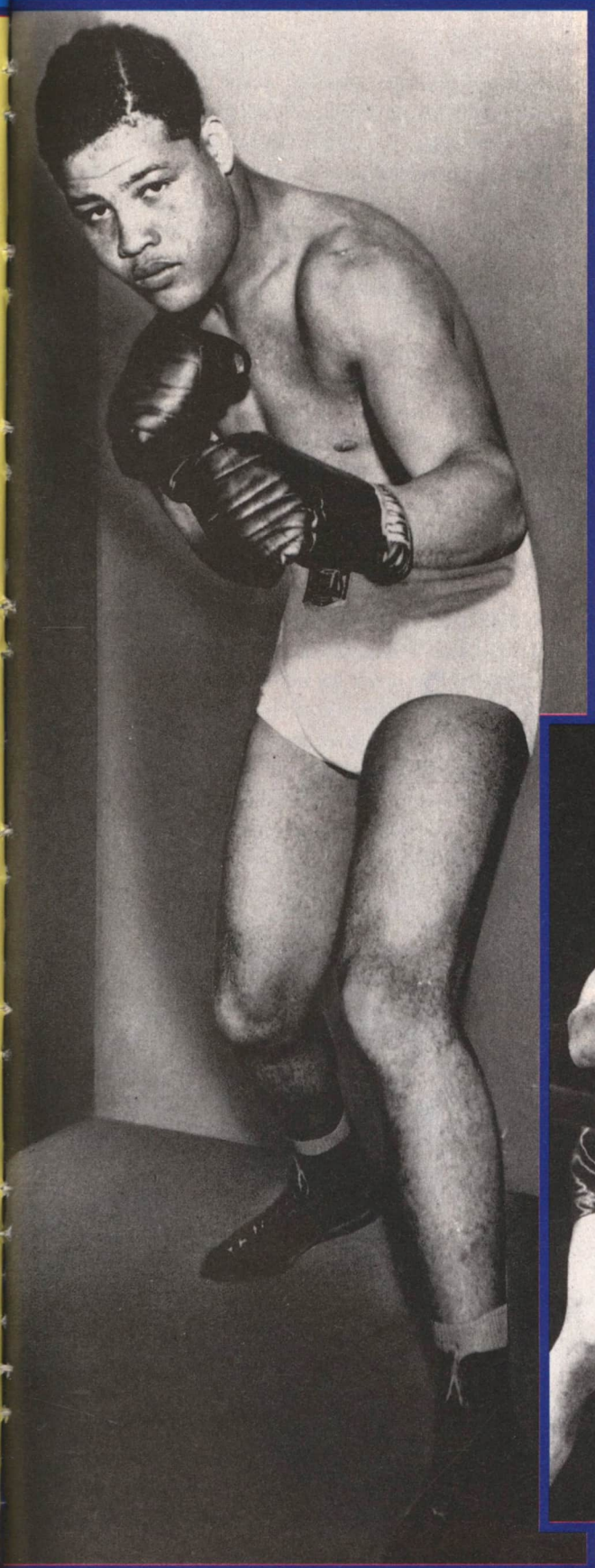
Louis' strengths: Eleven years, 8 months as champion and 25 successful title defenses, says it all. Louis had a heavy jab, threw devastating combinations of short, fast blows, and was sound at blocking and parrying. Trainer Jack Blackburn always had him in perfect shape at his peak. On the eve of the Max Schmeling rematch, Gene Tunney commented, "He's a much better boxer now. He is more compact, keeps his arms closer to his body, and gets his right up to block punches. Joe can take a punch and counter."

Louis' weaknesses: He struggled with speed (Billy Conn), unpredictability (Arturo Godoy), and cuteness (Jersey Joe



Dempsey destroys Georges Carpentier

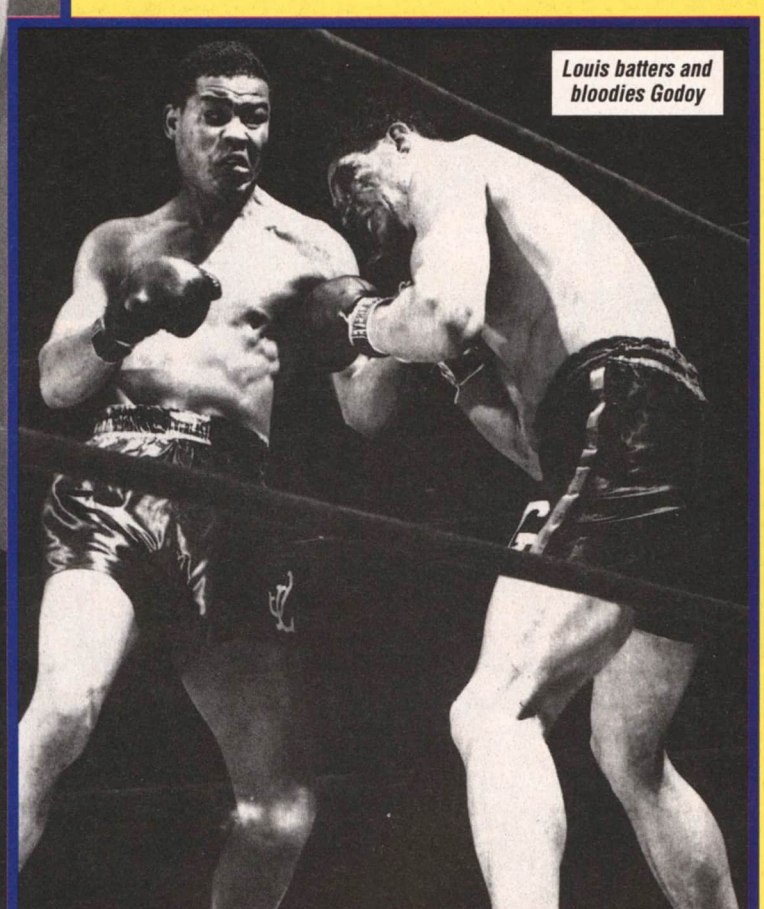
VS. JOE LOUIS



Walcott). More relevant to Dempsey is that Louis was dropped 10 times and was twice stopped by smaller men. Both Tony Galento and Rocky Marciano dropped him with hooks. Jack Johnson said Louis was a slow-footed manufactured boxer and a sucker for the right, with "poor craftsmanship," "marked mechanical flaws," and "not a very bright boy." Tunney complained in '38, "He still doesn't roll with a punch."

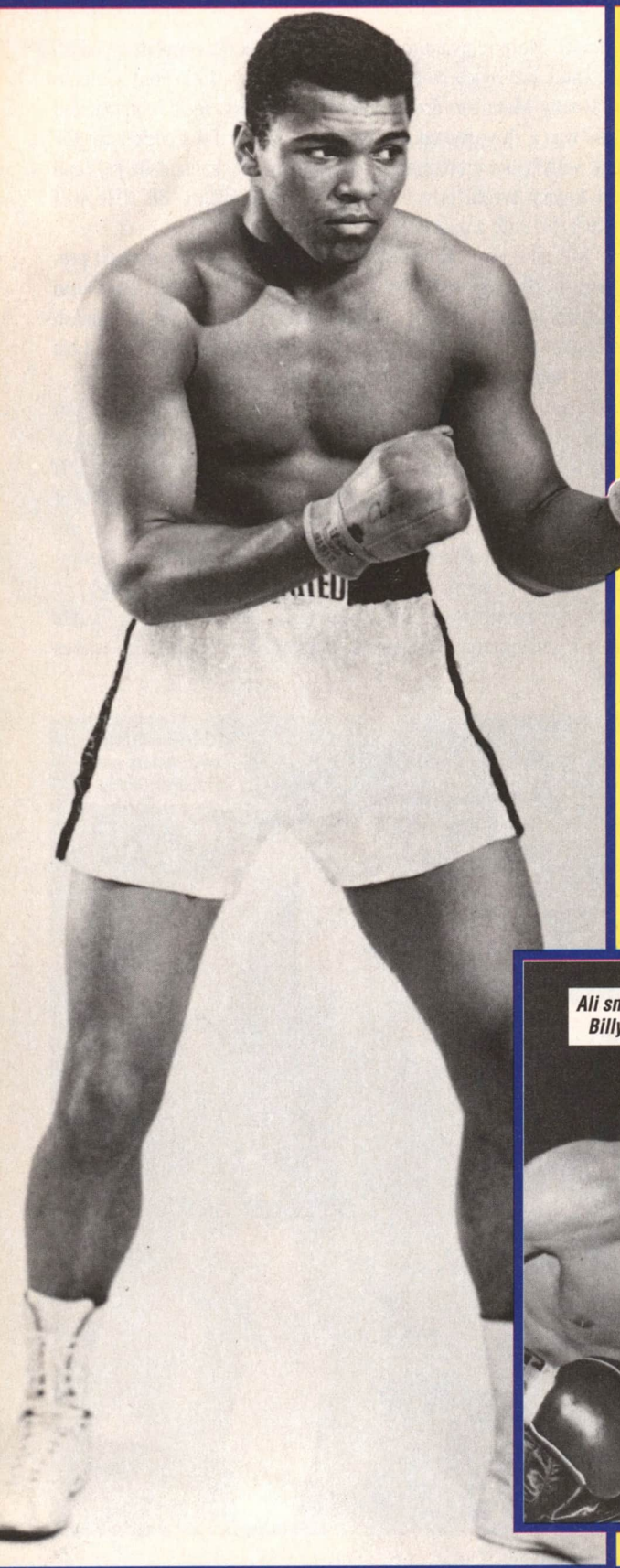
Style matchup: A perfect stylistic blend: ferocity against precision; hooks against jabs and crosses. The 6'1", 190-pound Dempsey fought out of a crouch, working his way in to unleash his hooks. The 6'1", 200-pound Louis shuffled forward behind his jab and worked best at middle range.

Outcome: Dempsey launches his crouching attack, but Louis' straighter punches, faster hands, and superior technique soon tell. Dempsey ducks under a jab to crash home a left hook in the third that floors Louis. He makes the mistake of hesitating before retreating, extending the count and giving Joe time to rise. After that, Louis uses his jab to close Dempsey's left eye. Louis drops him with two jabs and a right in round six. Dempsey is up at six, but is caught by three hooks and a right uppercut. He is down again, and the referee waves it off.



Louis batters and bloodies Godoy

MUHAMMAD ALI

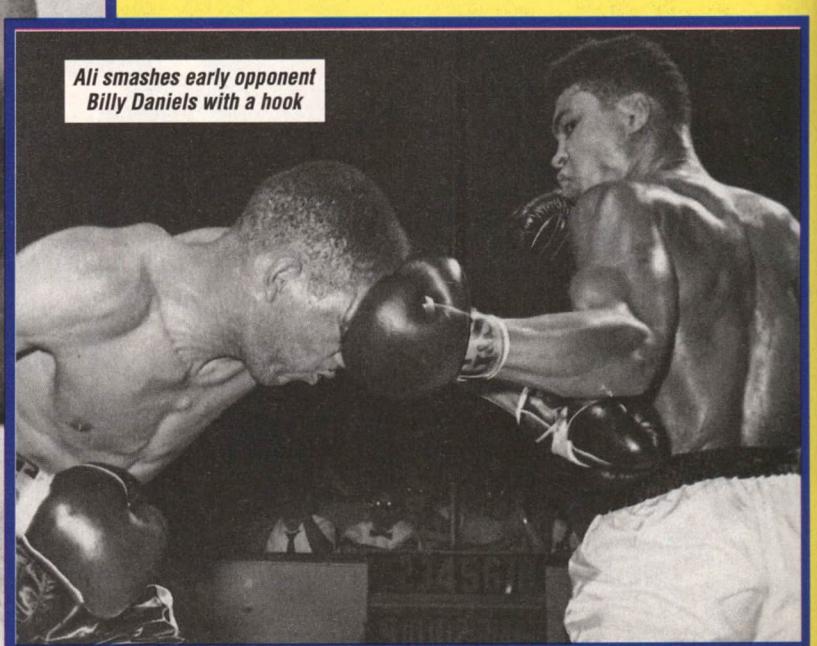


Tyson's strengths: The peak Tyson was far better than the heavy-handed banger of recent years. He punched in sustained combinations, bringing hooks from body to chin, and his head movement made him hard to tag. Despite his 72-inch reach, he had a fine jab, and despite three stoppage losses, a good chin. He was extremely aggressive and strong for his size, and intimidated almost everyone he fought.

Tyson's weaknesses: His Achilles heel was his unsettled mind, and Ali specialized in messing with minds. Former aide Teddy Atlas called Tyson a classic bully—great going forward, but wobbly when resistance is fierce. There were early hints of vulnerability (well before Buster Douglas and Evander Holyfield stopped him): the jab-and-move James Tillis held him to a close decision, Bonecrusher Smith tied him up, Tony Tucker and Frank Bruno shook him. Emanuel Steward said Tyson "always had trouble with big, strong, well-skilled heavyweights"—as Lennox Lewis proved by outboxing him and then battering him to defeat.

Ali's strengths: His phenomenal foot speed and amazing reflexes meant he took few punches in his prime (and when caught, he would turn his head to limit the impact). He had one of the best-ever chins (dropped four times, but never stopped until his second-to-last fight). His 82-inch reach allowed him to work from a safe distance, using that long, fast jab to set up dazzling combinations, while taunting his opponent to help break down resistance. Perfect timing and accuracy enabled him to stop men noted for durability.

Ali's weaknesses: An arm puncher who seldom put full weight behind his blows, he neglected bodypunching and his in-fighting was restricted to hooking his glove around his opponent's neck. On his way up, he was dropped by Sonny Banks and Henry Cooper. As

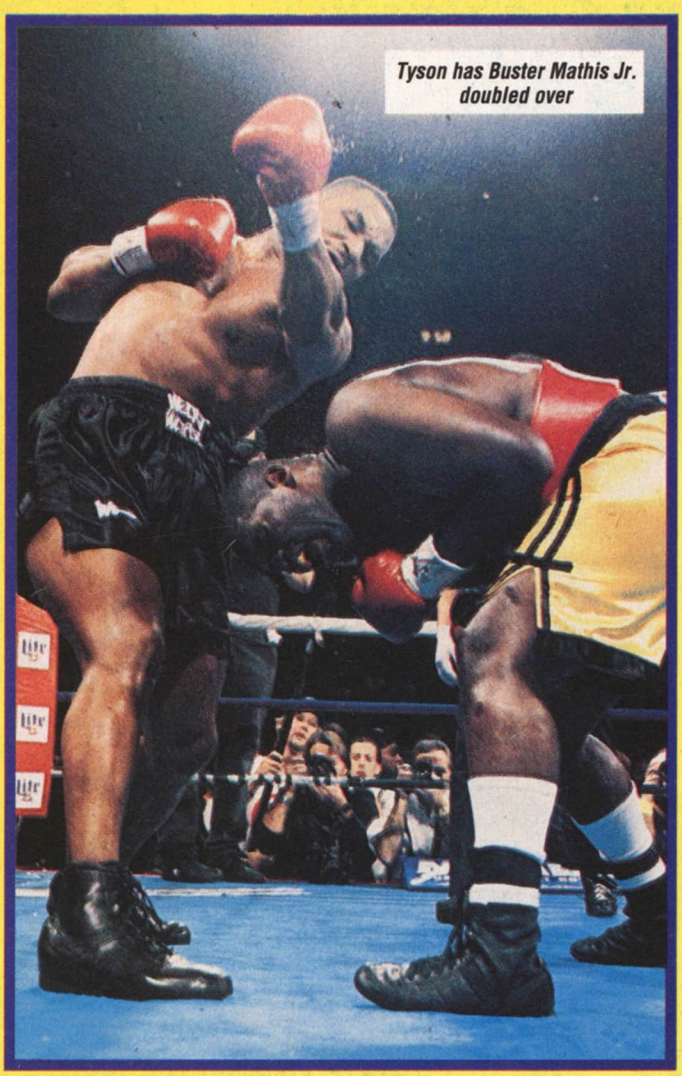


Ali smashes early opponent Billy Daniels with a hook

vs. MIKE TYSON

Style matchup: The 5'11", 218-pound Tyson fought behind a peek-a-boo guard, shifting his head and rolling his shoulders while pressing forward. The 6'3", 211-pound Ali circled the ring, boxing behind that long left jab, his hands at waist level. He would move in and out quickly with rapid-fire combinations and lean away from incoming flak.

Outcome: Angered by Ali's prefight taunts, Tyson launches a furious attack, but Ali dances away, before stepping in with a lead right. Tyson, however, surprises Ali with his own speed, landing four hooks to the body and head. Ali goes down, but is up quickly. From then on, Ali jabs and moves while talking to Tyson. Iron Mike becomes frustrated and is warned for fouls. His punches lose steam and no longer arrive in bunches. In the 12th, Tyson makes a desperate charge, and Ali drops him with a perfectly timed right. In the 13th, it is Ali who attacks, dropping Tyson again with a six-punch combination. Tyson clambers to his feet, but the referee has seen enough.



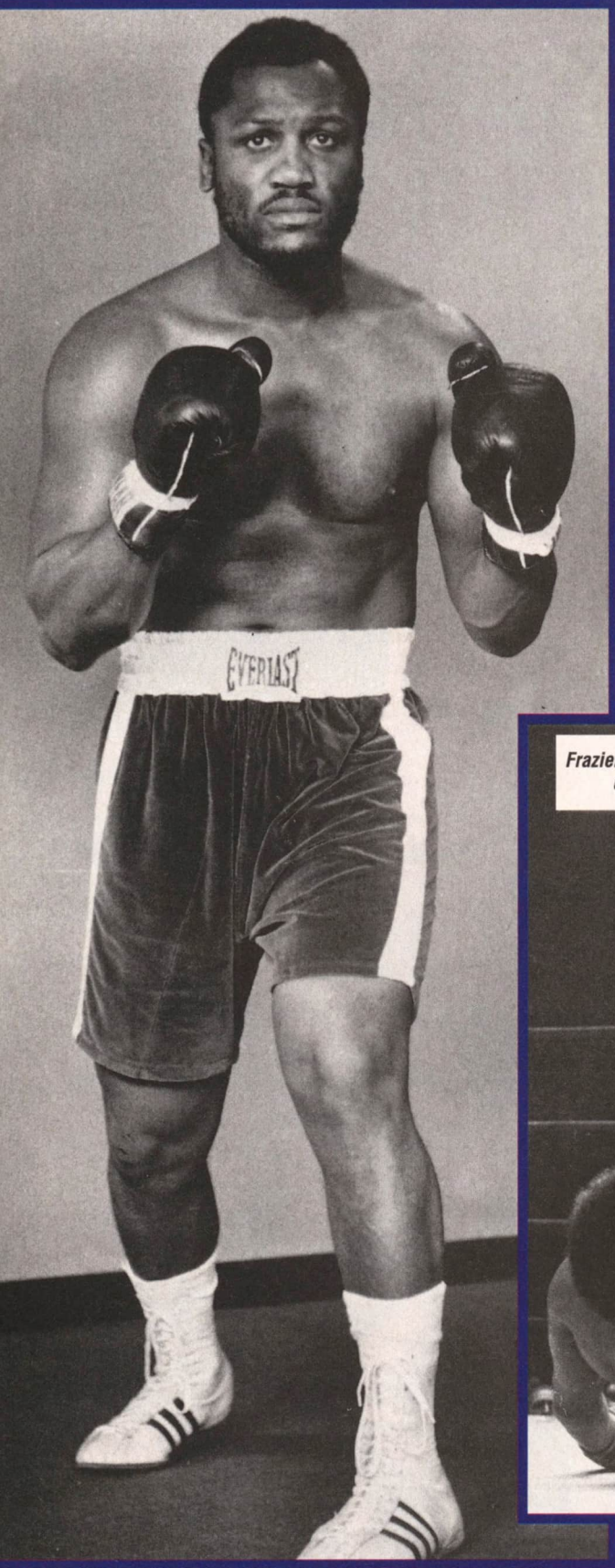
Tyson has Buster Mathis Jr. doubled over

mpion, he was temporarily befuddled by Karl Mildenberger's thpaw style. Steward said Ali had problems with "physically ng guys who were not intimidated by him—like Kenny Norton," Tyson was stronger and harder hitting than Norton.

MIKE TYSON vs MUHAMMAD ALI

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER

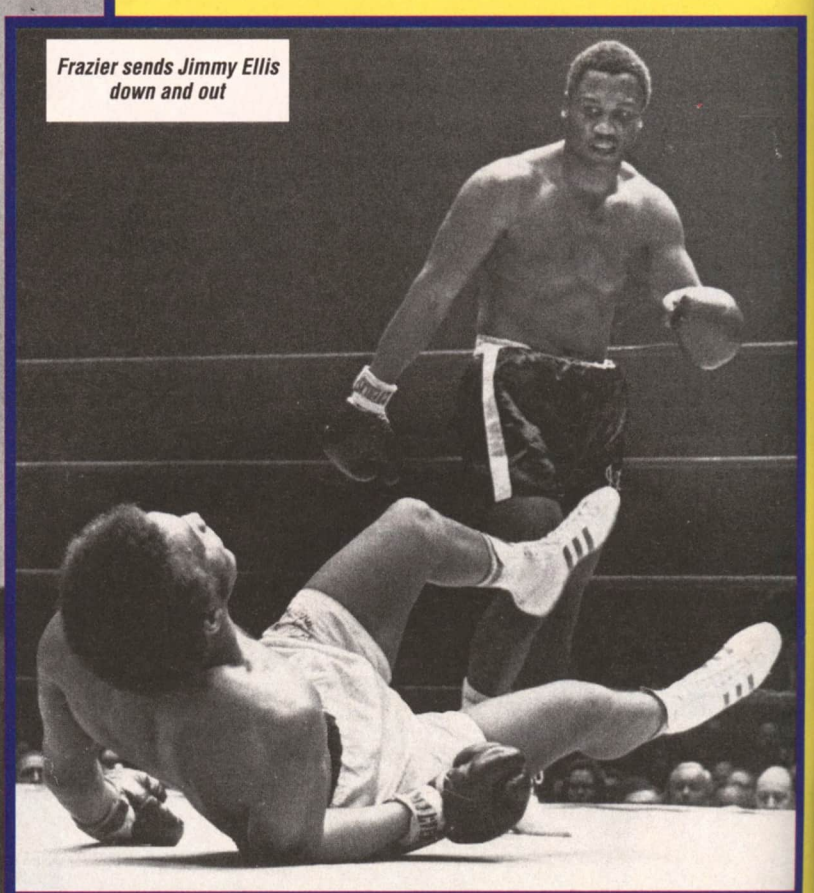
JOE FRAZIER vs.



Marciano's strengths: No previous heavyweight put so much commitment behind every blow. Rocky could break resistance by punching his foe's arms and could end a fight at any stage with a single hook or cross. He was extraordinarily strong for his size, always in magnificent condition, with vast reserves of stamina and courage and a great chin. Angelo Dundee said that despite the impression of crudity, his head-shifting defense was better than it appeared.

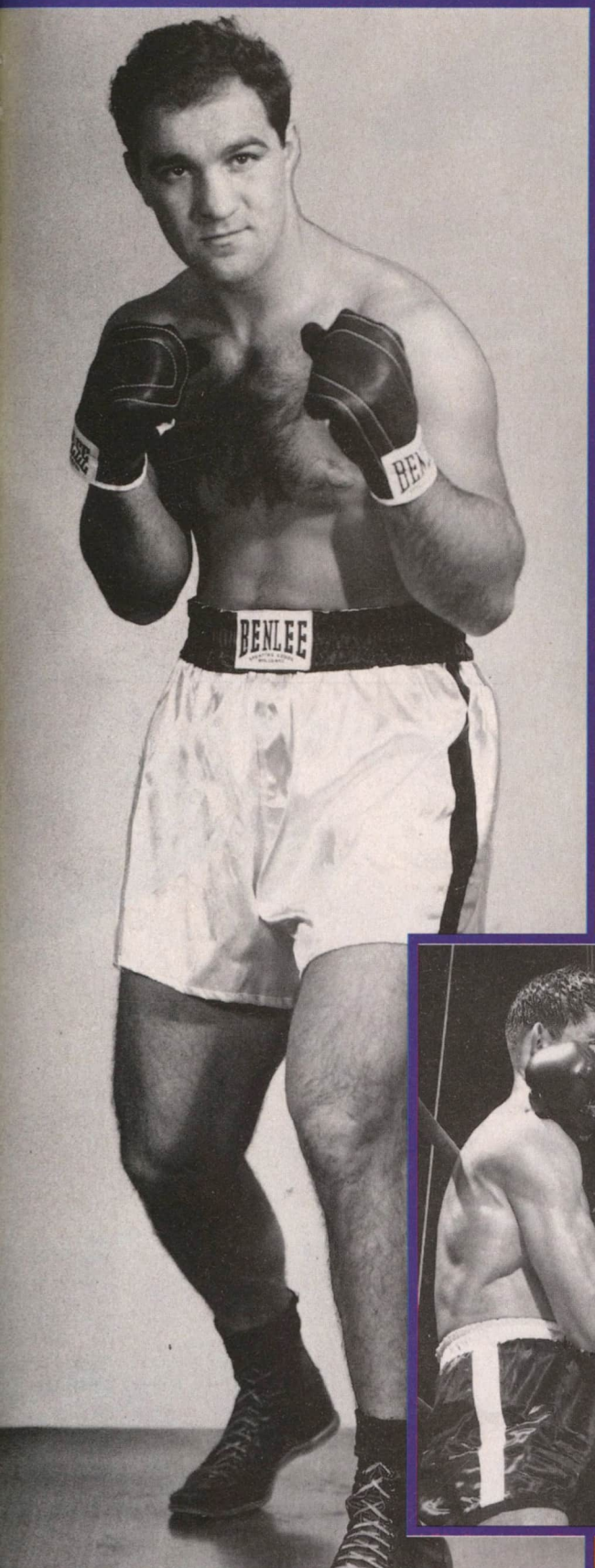
Marciano's weaknesses: He was limited by his 68-inch reach (three inches shorter than Frazier's), tissue paper skin, and rudimentary skills. Aside from Joe Louis, an aged 212-pounder, he fought no decent sized heavies. His manager avoided Nino Valdes, and some dispute "The Rock's" unbeaten record, noting that he lost an "amateur" fight after turning professional. He scraped a disputed split decision against Roland La Starza and twice came close to defeat against a shopworn Ezzard Charles. He was dropped and outboxed for 12 rounds by a 38-year-old Jersey Joe Walcott and dropped again by light heavyweight Archie Moore, who was 41 at the time.

Frazier's strengths: He bobbed and weaved his way inside to launch barrages of hooks from the soles of his feet. He rolled his head and dipped his shoulders, making him hard to catch. Always



Frazier sends Jimmy Ellis down and out

ROCKY MARCIANO

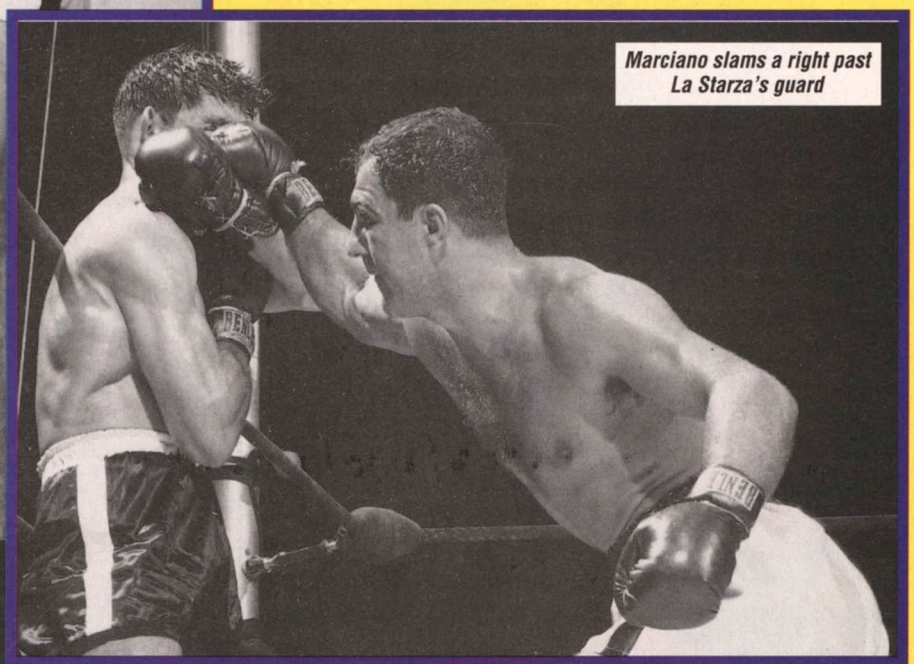


in great shape at his peak, he had the stamina to outwork his opponents. He did particularly well against the squat, two-fisted types, twice trouncing Jerry Quarry, carving up George Chuvalo, and clearly outpointing Oscar Bonavena in their return. He withstood the blows of good punchers like Bonavena, Quarry, and Bob Foster.

Frazier's weaknesses: He was a one-dimensional fighter whose reputation was established through victory over a rusty Muhammad Ali, who came close to stopping him in their return and outlasted him in their rubber match. George Foreman used Frazier as a punchbag, dropping him six times in their first fight. His inability to adapt was exposed in the rematch when he was dropped three more times with hooks and uppercuts while wading in. "Smokin' Joe" was also dropped twice on his way to winning a disputed split decision against Bonavena in their first fight.

Style matchup: A head-on collision between two freight trains, it promises blood, gore, and the crunch of fist against bone. Both liked to get up close and personal. Neither bothered with jabs. The 5'11", 205-pound Frazier favored the left hook. He loved to pummel opponents on the ropes. The 5'10½", 185-pound Marciano mixed up short hooks, uppercuts, and crosses with both hands.

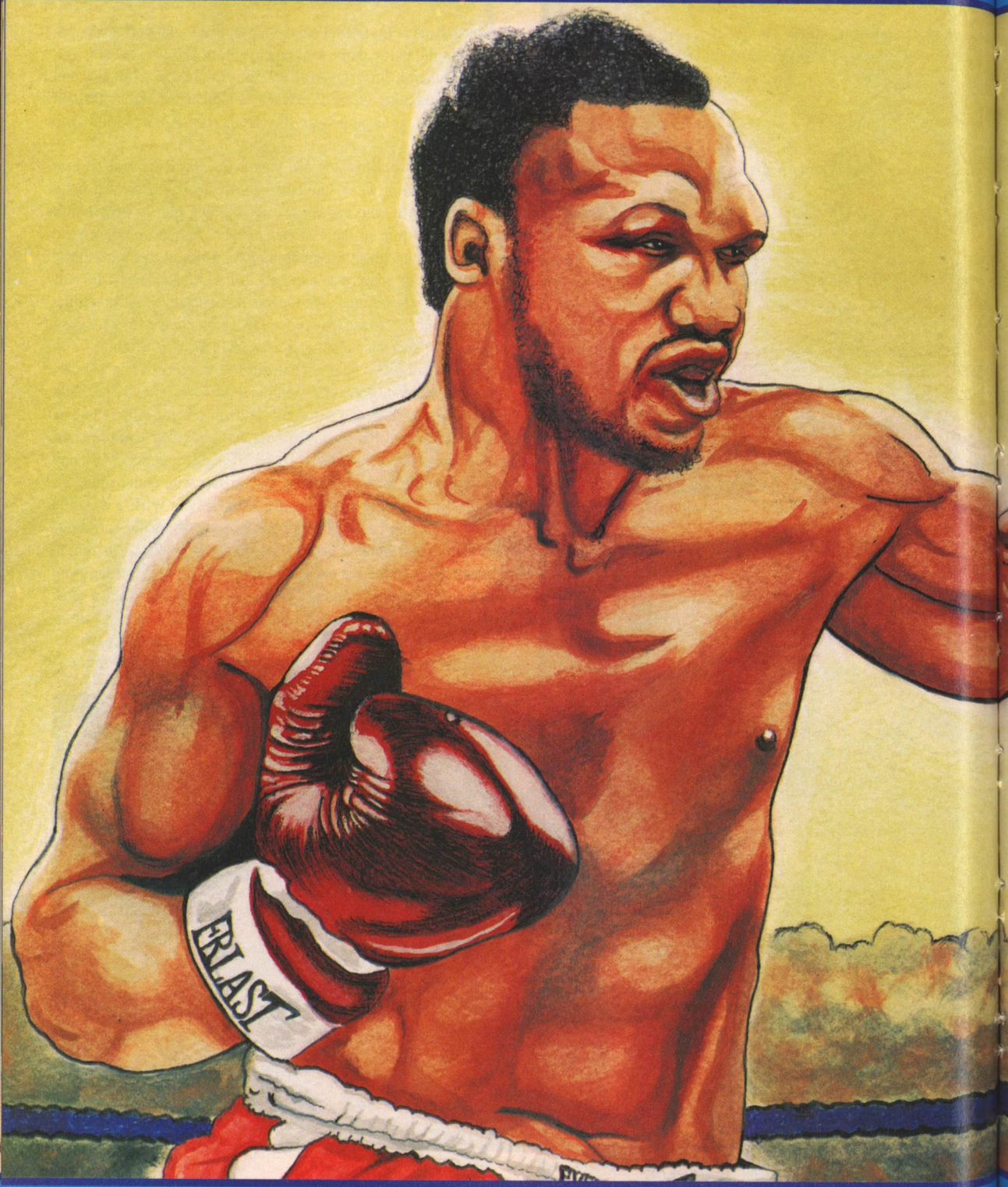
Outcome: After introducing themselves with a vicious exchange in ring center, Frazier drives back Marciano and drops him with a left hook. Frazier's advantages in size and strength appear to be making it a one-sided fight. Marciano is leaking from cuts on both eyes and taking heavy punishment, but lands a massive right cross in the fourth. Frazier goes down but gets up at nine, and he's relieved to hear the bell. Midway through round six, a right splits open Marciano's nose and the referee calls a halt.

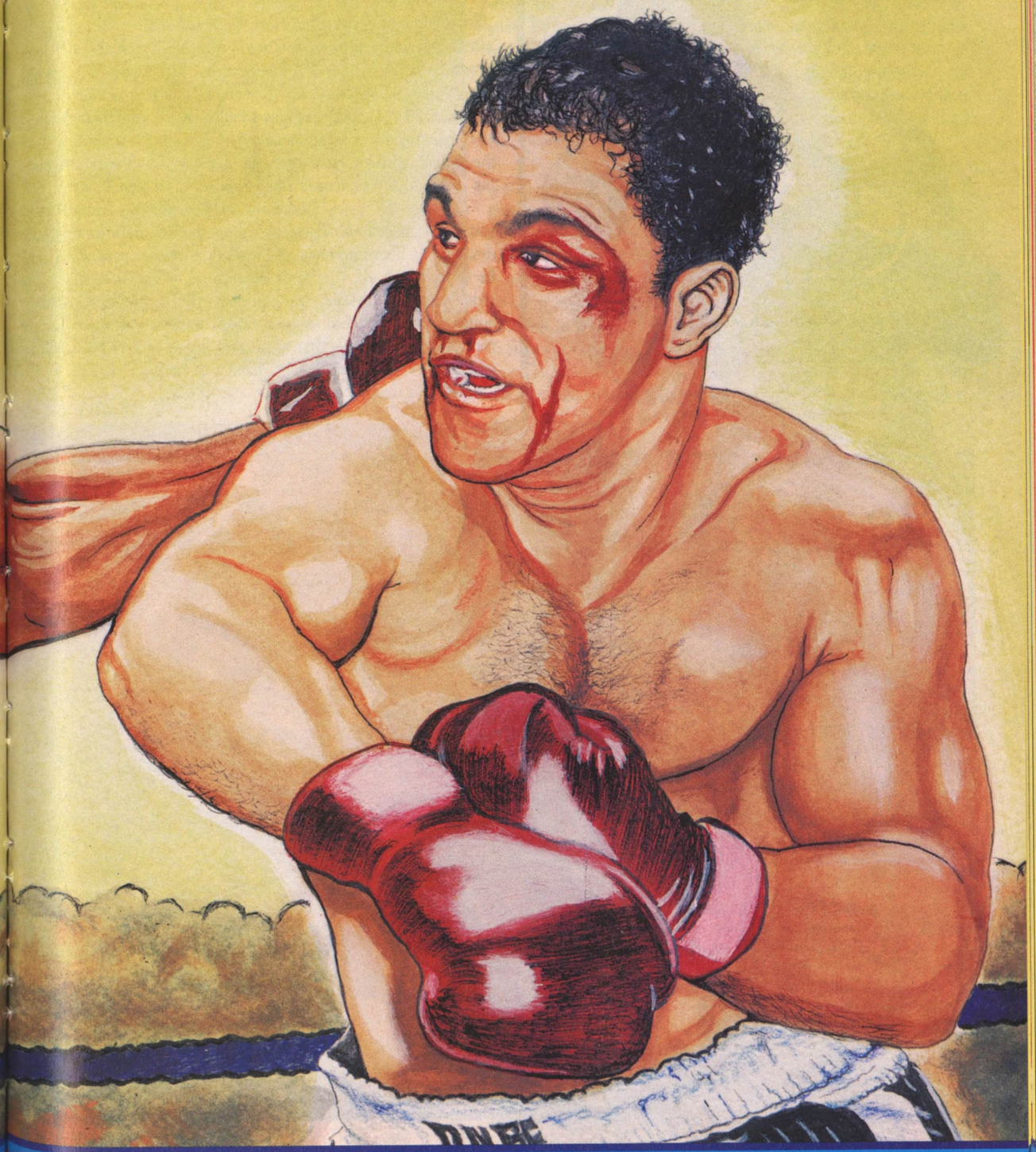


Marciano slams a right past La Starza's guard

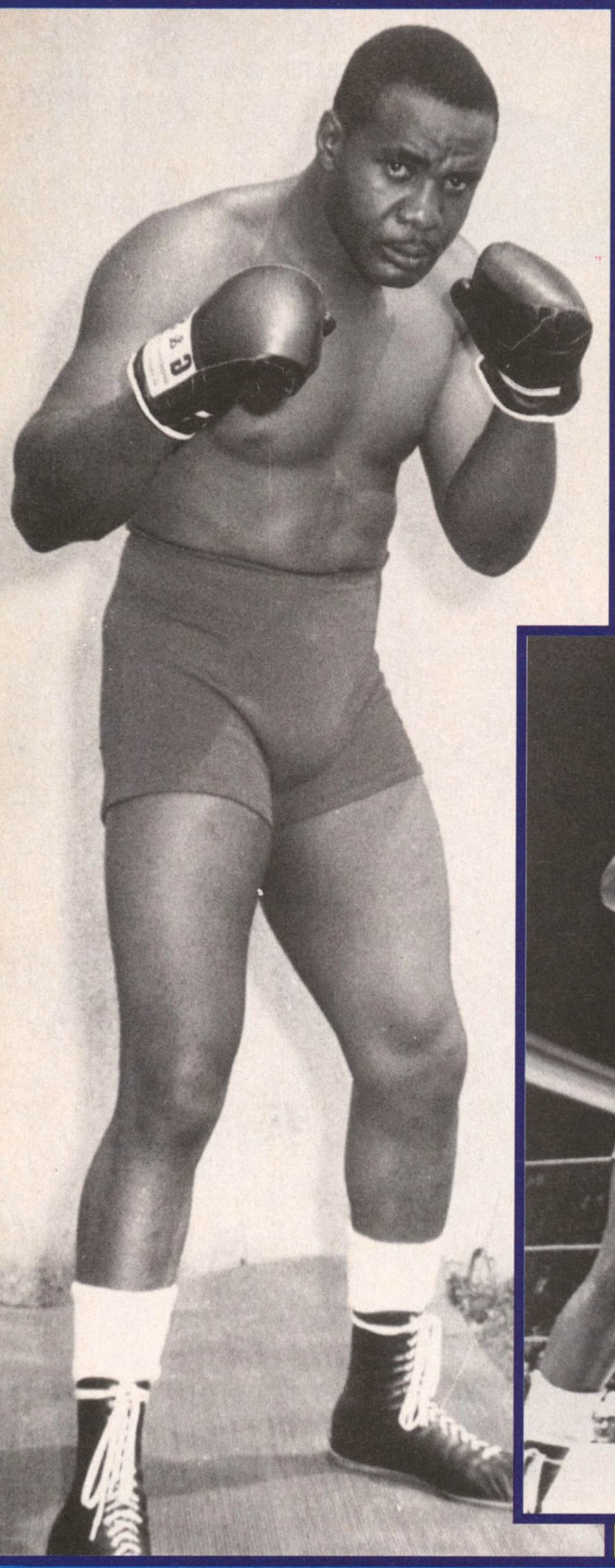
JOE FRAZIER vs. ROCKY MARCIANO

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER



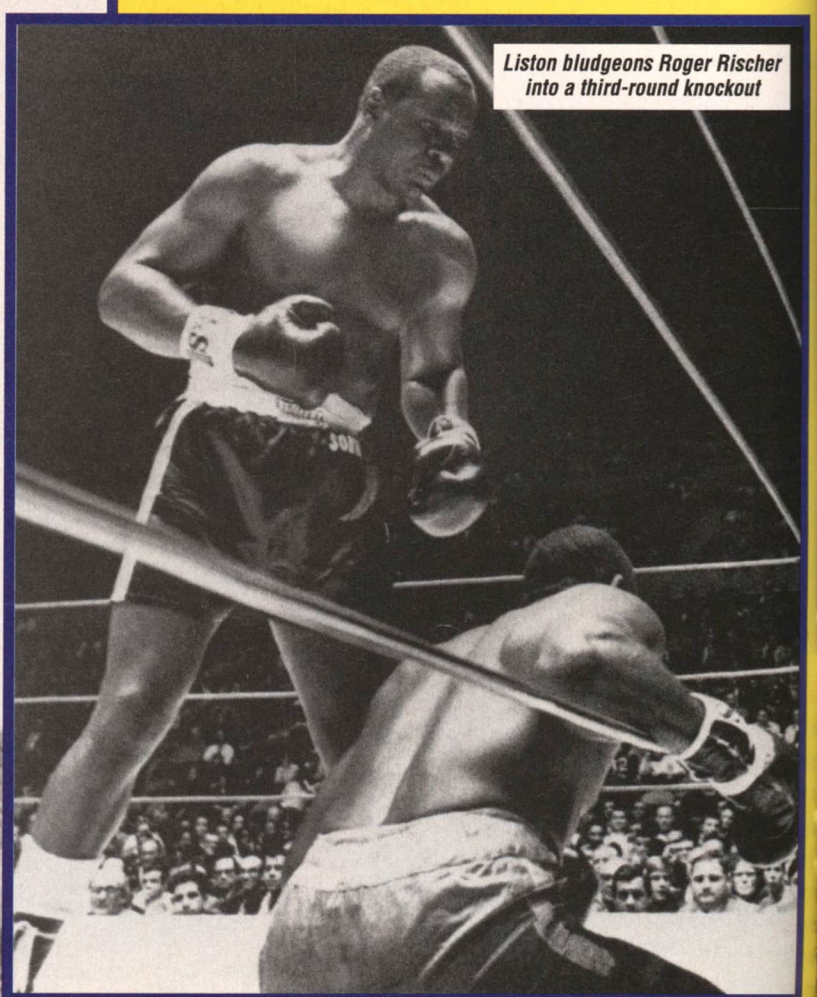


SONNY LISTON vs.



Liston's strengths: He had devastating power in his hooks and crosses, sound defensive skills, and perhaps the heaviest jab in heavyweight history. He showed heart by fighting on after suffering a broken jaw against Marty Marshall (and later reversed that early loss). Big hitters such as Cleveland Williams and Nino Valdes failed to dent his chin, and he also beat top boxers Zora Folley, Eddie Machen, and Floyd Patterson. He intimidated everyone he met and seemed invincible during his 1958-'62 prime. After the second Ali fight, he won 15 out of 16, with 14 knockouts, carving up future Ali challenger Chuck Wepner in his final bout.

Liston's weaknesses: Liston was held back by his criminal ways and mob connections, losing two years through imprisonment. He developed a booze problem and was not always in peak shape, and he slowed with age (not least because he was at least four years older than his "official" bio claimed). His surprisingly difficult points win over Machen suggested difficulties with tricky movers, a view confirmed by the first of his two losses against Ali when he quit in his corner. The curious manner of both Ali defeats sullied his reputation forever.



Liston bludgeons Roger Rischer into a third-round knockout

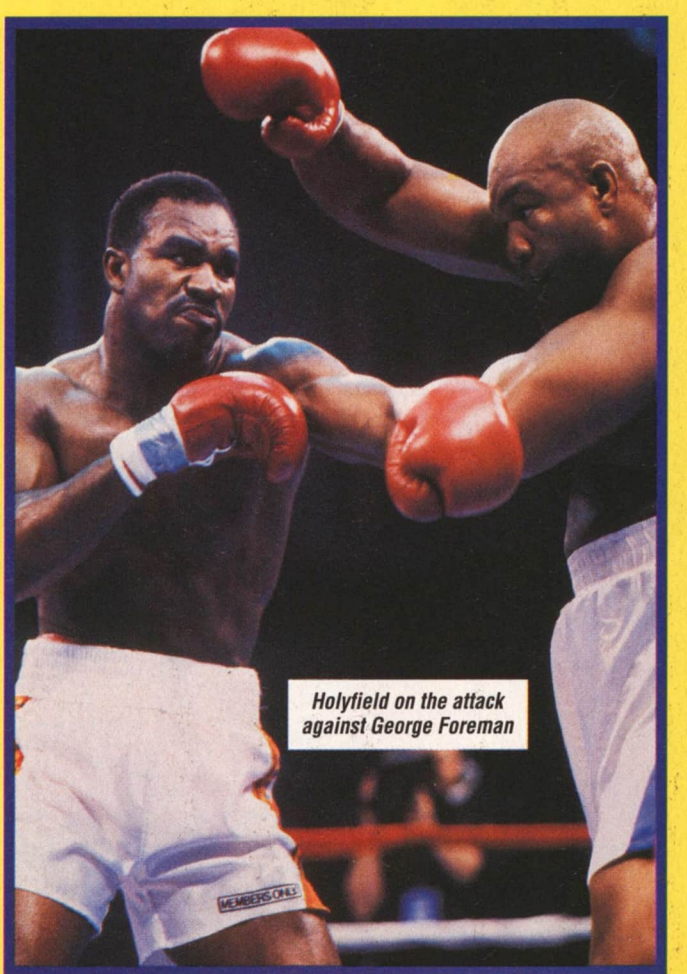
EVANDER HOLYFIELD

Holyfield's strengths: His courage and determination, combined with his well-honed boxing skills, power, speed, and conditioning, enabled him to excel in an era of huge heavyweights. Ken Norton, himself a strong heavyweight, acknowledged he had nowhere near Holyfield's strength. After unifying the cruiserweight title, Holyfield twice held the linear heavyweight title and twice more held alphabet versions of the title, facing every conceivable style. He hit hard enough to drop or stop durable heavyweights Mike Tyson, Riddick Bowe, and Ray Mercer, and took the punches of some of the biggest hitters boxing has known.

Holyfield's weaknesses: He has been an inconsistent performer, with a heavyweight record of 20-6-2 (11). When Holyfield was at his peak, Bowe proved too powerful for him, winning two out of three, and Vander was confused by Michael Moorer's southpaw counter-punching in their first match. Lennox Lewis used his reach, jab, and movement to outbox him, but Holyfield was past his best by then. He's considered a dirty fighter by many, particularly with his head. He has been stopped just once and dropped five times.

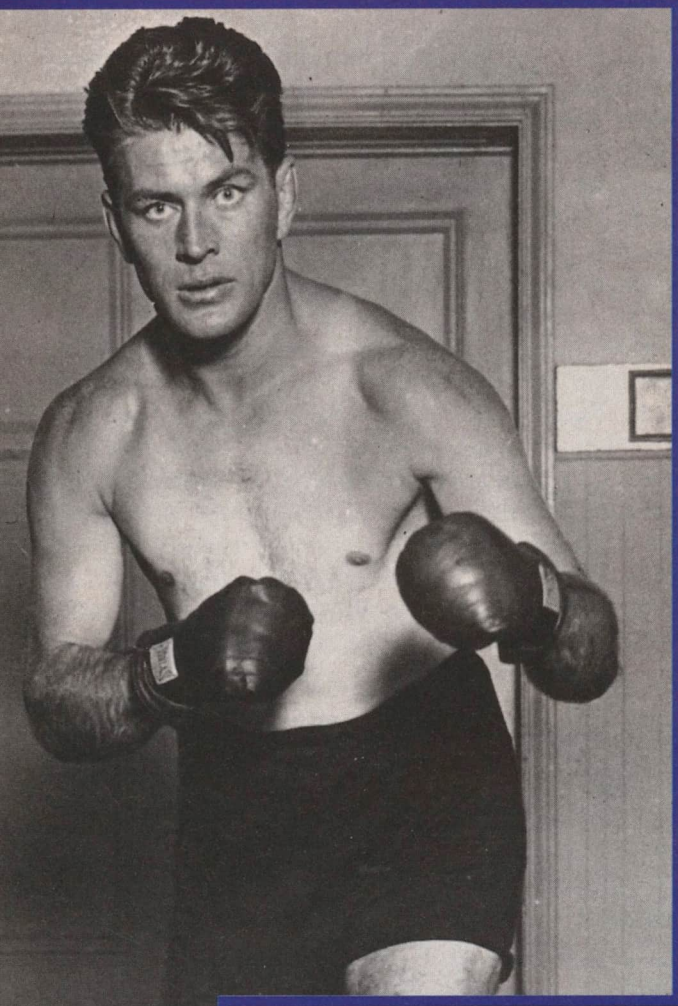
Style matchup: The 6'2", 216-pound Holyfield could jab and move, but he was seldom averse to a punch-up and could battle in the trenches. The 6'1", 212-pound Liston, with his 84-inch reach, preferred a bit of space to place his bombs, working behind his long jab.

Outcome: Holyfield has a slight edge in height and weight, but Liston seems the bigger man. Using his seven-inch reach advantage, he slams home his jab. Holyfield uses his foot speed to move in and out, and in round eight wobbles Liston with a hard left hook. He launches a furious attack, but Liston carries the heavier artillery and drops Holyfield with a right. Holyfield outworks a tiring Liston in the final rounds, but it is not quite enough, and he loses a majority decision amid cries of "robbery!"



Holyfield on the attack against George Foreman

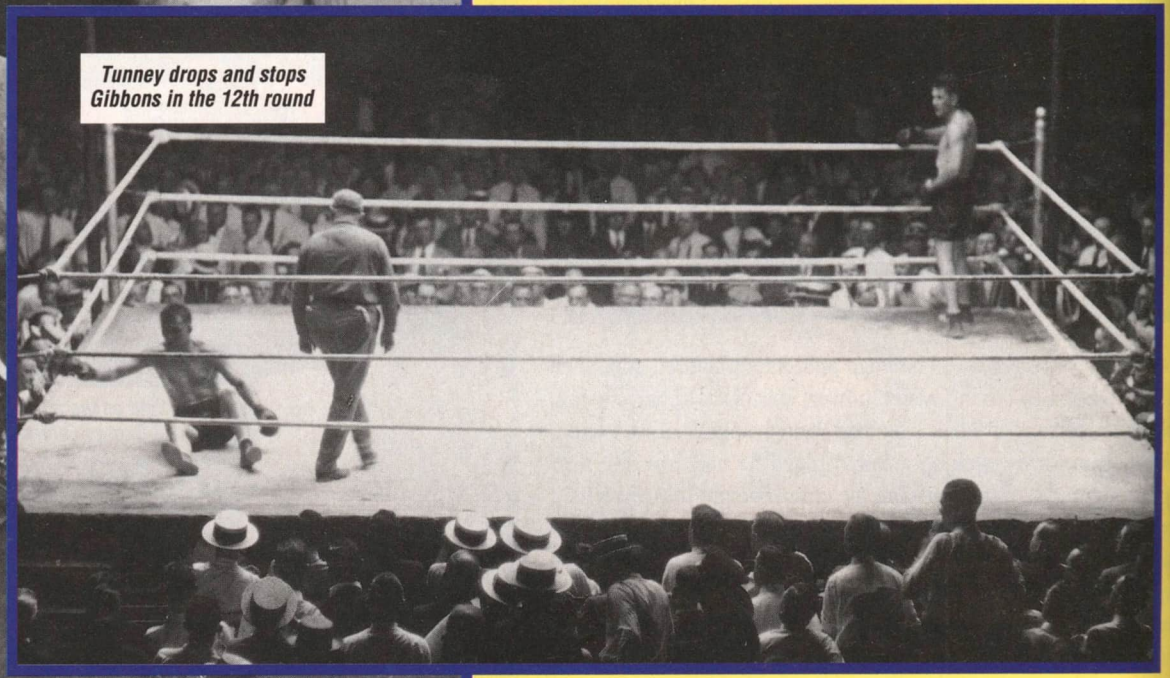
GENE TUNNEY VS



Tunney's strengths: A quick mover with tight defense, sharp jab, decent chin, and superb conditioning, Tunney hit hard enough to drop Jack Dempsey and stop Tommy Gibbons, Georges Carpentier, and Tom Heeney. He suffered only one defeat in 87 bouts—showing tremendous heart by surviving 15 rounds of torture against Greb in their first bout. He took the science of self-defense to new levels, studying opponents and practicing technique until he had perfected it. As Paul Gallico put it: "Tunney was thoroughly unspectacular, but he was workmanlike and efficient. He was one of the most correct fighters the ring has ever known and one of the best boxers."

Tunney's weaknesses: He had nowhere near Johnson's innate ability, nor his power. Although past his best, the unorthodox Greb battered him the first time around and deserved the nod in their second fight, suggesting that Tunney struggled with the unexpected (and no one was less predictable than Johnson). Tunney was never more than a bulked-up light heavy and only fought two genuine heavyweights. Dempsey might very well have knocked him out in their second fight, if not for the long count.

Johnson's strengths: He had more natural ability than any other pre-World War II heavyweight. He would pick off incoming flack from the air while placing his own blows, virtually in the same movement. He was stronger than his contemporaries, including the 227-pound Jim Jeffries, whom he outmuscled up close and outboxed at range. He often carried opponents, but possessed knockout power in both hands. Between 1901 and '26, his only losses in 87 bouts were a disqualification against Joe Jeannette (whom he twice beat), a points loss to Marvin Hart (almost certainly a thrown fight), and a



Tunney drops and stops Gibbons in the 12th round

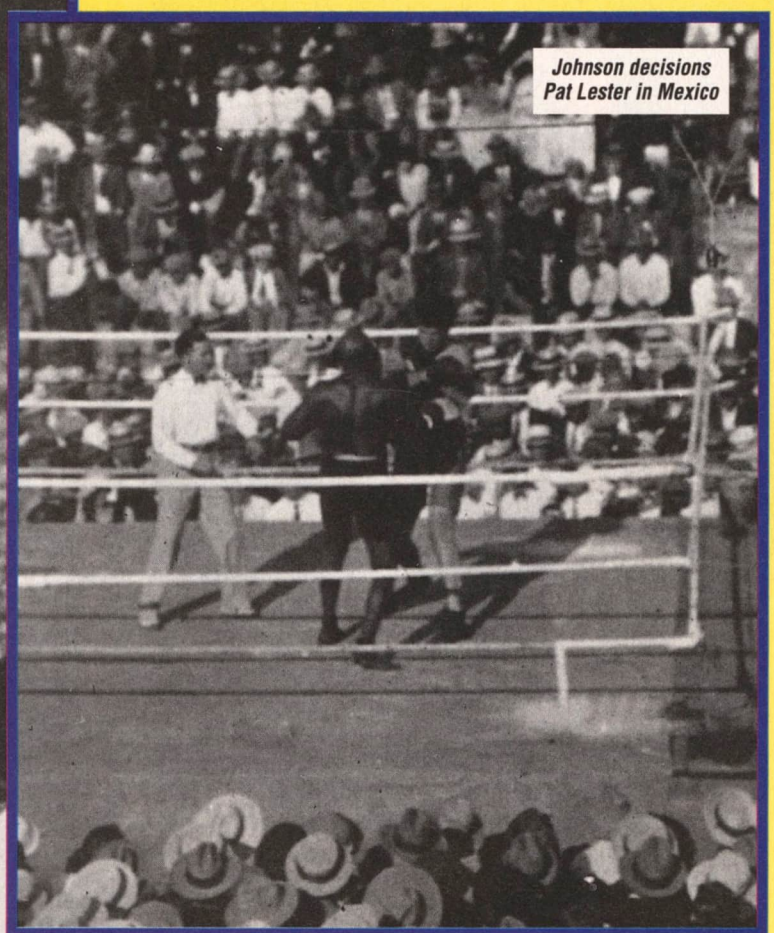
JACK JOHNSON

26th-round stoppage loss to Jess Willard, in the Havana heat when Johnson was 37.

Johnson's weaknesses: He was frequently a lackadaisical fighter and lazy trainer. He came from a pre-combination punching era of single blows and incessant clinching, and never had to cope with anything like Tunney's movement, combinations, and punch rate. Five stoppage defeats (in 113 bouts) suggests he didn't have the hardest chin.

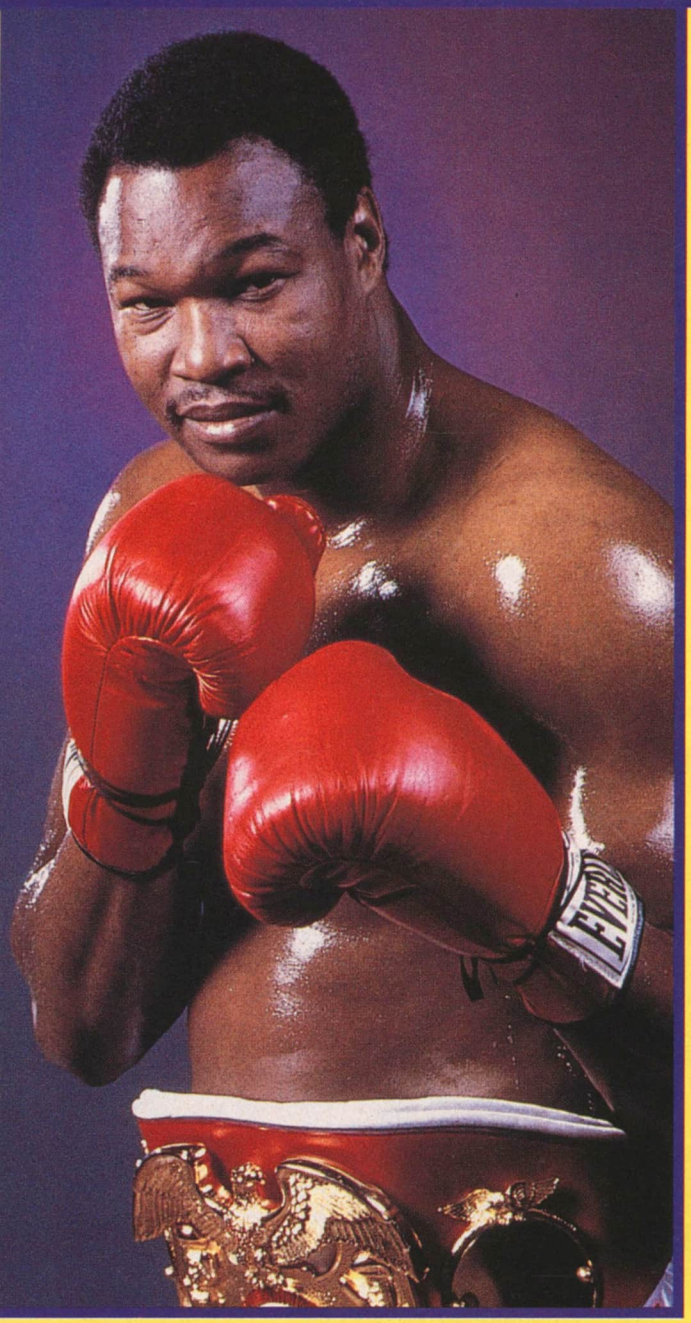
Style matchup: Both men stood just over six feet tall and weighed around 190 pounds at their peaks. Johnson would glide around at a languid pace, slipping or parrying with an open hand, deftly countering and then holding. The busier Tunney held his left at chest level and jabbed off the back foot—always alert to opportunities to land his right. He had a loping style while backpedaling.

Outcome: The cautious Tunney is throwing more and picking up points, while Johnson is countering with single punches. In the 10th, Johnson catches the jab and smashes home a left hook, followed by a right cross. Tunney rises at nine and runs, but Johnson cuts off the ring, feints, and lands a devastating right. The count reaches 10 with Tunney's glove still on the canvas.



Johnson decisions Pat Lester in Mexico

LARRY HOLMES VS



Walcott's strengths: He turned his sparring partner image around after the war, perfecting a crab-like style that allowed him to launch surprise sorties while absorbing little punishment. He started reversing previous losses and reached his peak at 34. He was a real cutie, full of tricks like walking away, then turning to bang home a right (twice dropping Joe Louis this way before getting robbed in their first bout) or landing the left hook when the right was expected (as when knocking out Ezzard Charles in 1951). Even nearing 39, he managed to drop Rocky Marciano and outbox him for 12 rounds.

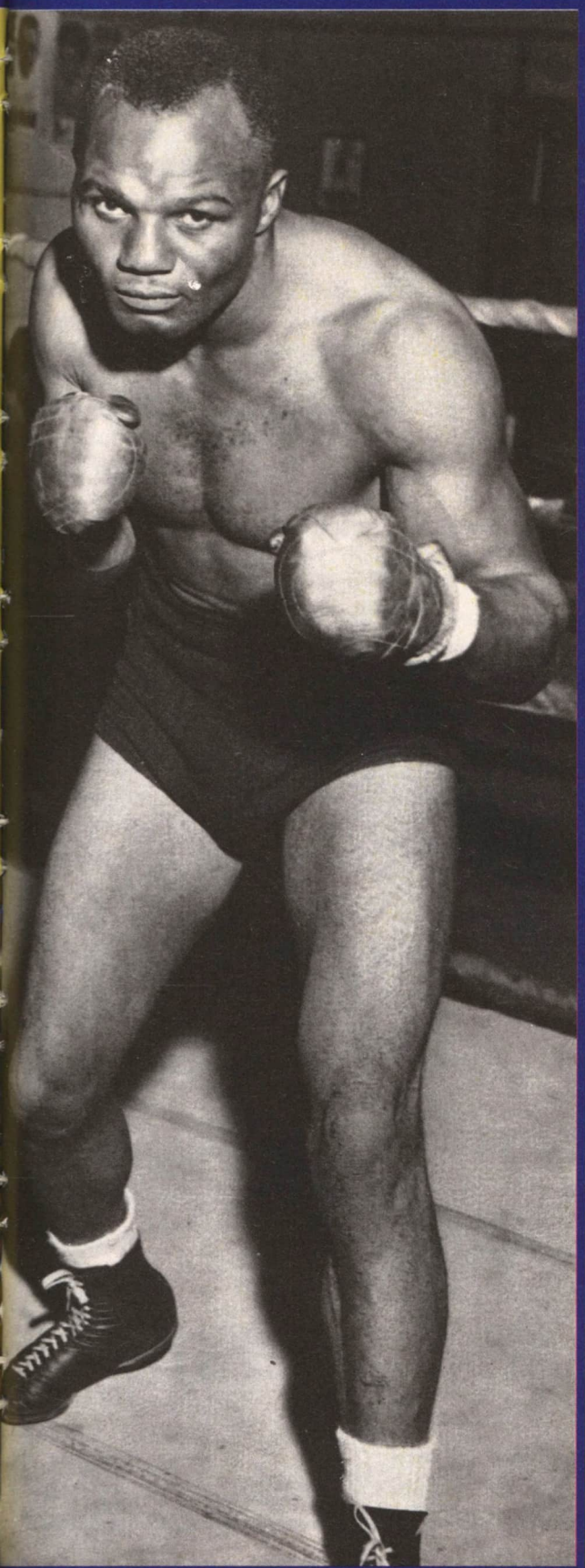
Walcott's weaknesses: Walcott lost 18 times in 72 bouts, and several of those defeats came in his golden years. He was knocked out on six occasions and downed numerous times, including by Charles, who was 30 pounds lighter than Holmes. Better boxers and bigger hitters tended to get the better of him. He was fortunate his prime came when there was a dearth of heavyweight talent, but still suffered setbacks against smaller men like Skippy Allen, Joey Maxim, and Elmer Ray. The Louis he outboxed (and who knocked him out in their return) was a shadow of the pre-war version. Walcott finally won the title on his fifth try, when Charles was in decline.

Holmes' strengths: He had it all: magnificent jab, decent power, sharp reflexes, sound defense, great recovery powers, and the vast experience from his apprenticeships with Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. He defended the title 20 times, beating seven former heavyweight titleholders. At 42, he was still good enough to outclass Ray Mercer and hold his own with Evander Holyfield. Emanuel Steward said, "With his strength and that very good, fast jab, Larry would have been a much more difficult opponent for Lennox Lewis than Ali."

Holmes' weaknesses: He lacked Ali's speed, Foreman's size and power, and Frazier's tenacity. He claimed he was twice robbed against Michael Spinks and later against Brian Nielsen, but

Holmes turns back the clock and rocks Mercer

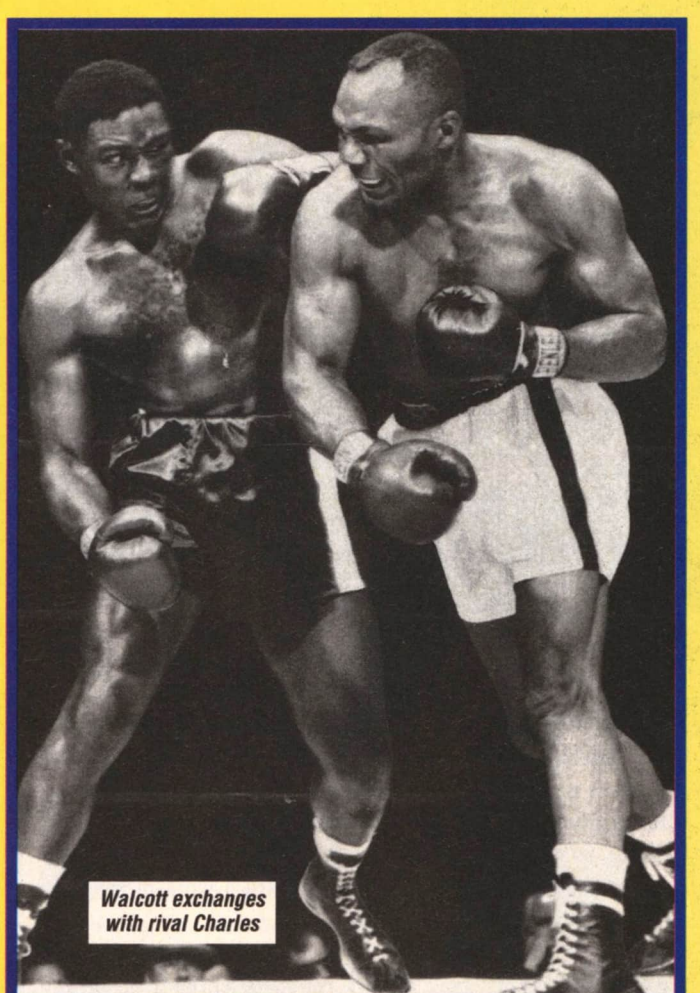
JERSEY JOE WALCOTT



the first Spinks result was fair, and what about the questionable verdicts in his favor against Tim Witherspoon, Carl Williams, and Mo Harris—all smart boxers with cute skills? Holmes won the WBC title on a split decision over a faded Ken Norton, never won universal recognition, and avoided Pinklon Thomas and Greg Page. He was dropped heavily by Earnie Shavers and Renaldo Snipes and knocked out by Mike Tyson.

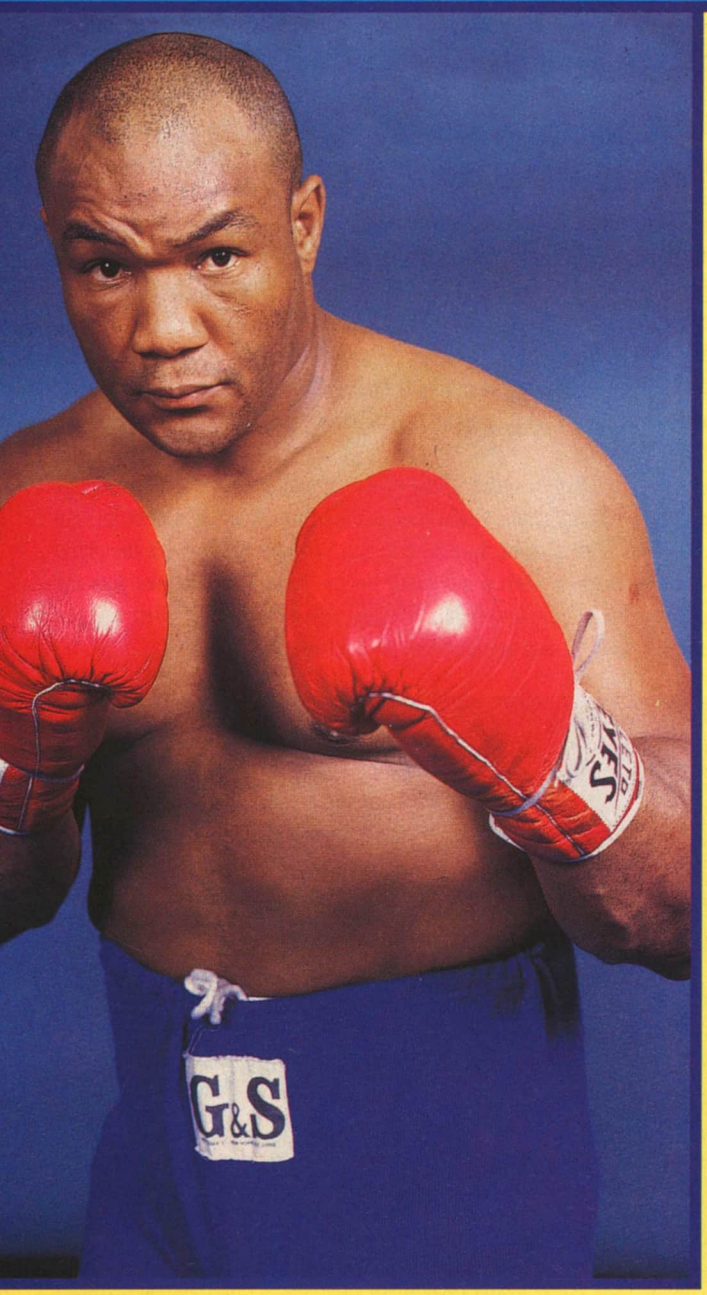
Style matchup: The 6'3", 215-pound Holmes was an aggressive boxer who used his 81-inch reach to make the openings for his right cross. The 6', 194-pound Walcott would also box from behind the jab, but his style was less conventional. He was a box of tricks, constantly trying to sucker opponents with surprise punches from unexpected angles.

Outcome: Holmes uses his seven-inch reach advantage to rake up the points with his jab, while easily avoiding Walcott's attempts to sucker him with a right. In round eight, Walcott feints with the right and drops Holmes with a left hook on the chin. But Holmes gets up and soon starts fighting back. Holmes drops Walcott with a right cross in round 10 and again in the 11th to end the fight.



Walcott exchanges with rival Charles

GEORGE FOREMAN

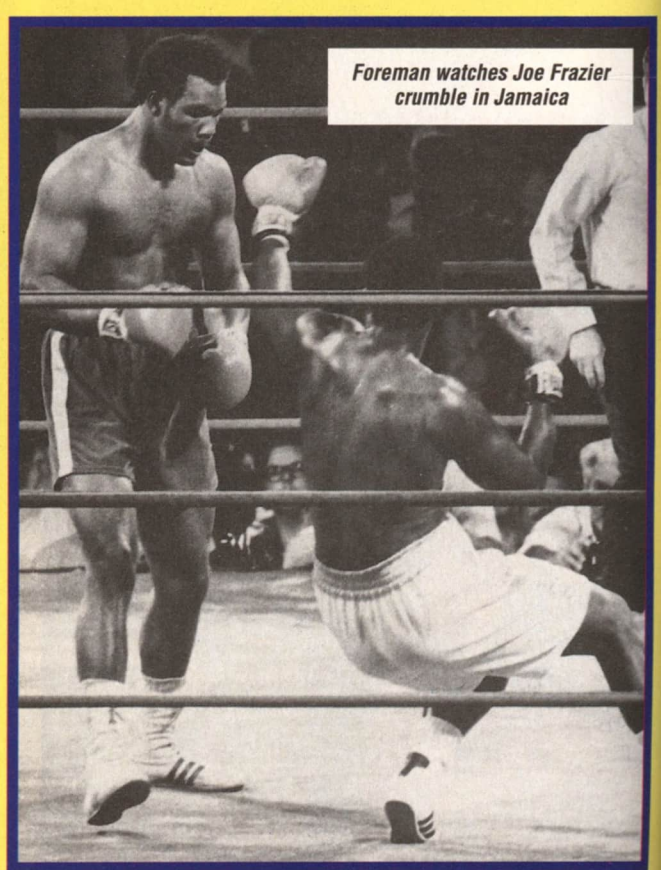


Foreman's strengths: One of the strongest-ever heavyweights, with the power to demolish contemporaries like Joe Frazier, Ken Norton, and Ron Lyle, and, years later, Gerry Cooney and Michael Moorer (when he became the oldest champion ever), the heavy-handed Foreman was also a sound defensive boxer. He had one of the hardest jabs and chins in the business, as was frequently proven during his reincarnation. After his brief amateur career, Foreman was still a work-in-progress when outfoxed by Muhammad Ali.

Foreman's weaknesses: He was never the complete article. First time around he tended to blow early. He left himself open by winging his punches to overwhelm smaller men, but struggled with clever boxers like Ali, Jimmy Young, and Greg Peralta, and never faced anyone like Lewis—a skilled, big hitter who was two inches taller, 20 pounds heavier, and had a five-inch reach advantage. Once Foreman ran out of steam, his punch resistance diminished. Ali knocked him out, the feather-fisted Young dropped him, and so did Lyle twice. By the time "Big George" returned, he'd remedied these flaws, but age and lack of mobility saw him outboxed by Evander Holyfield, Tommy Morrison, and Axel Schulz.

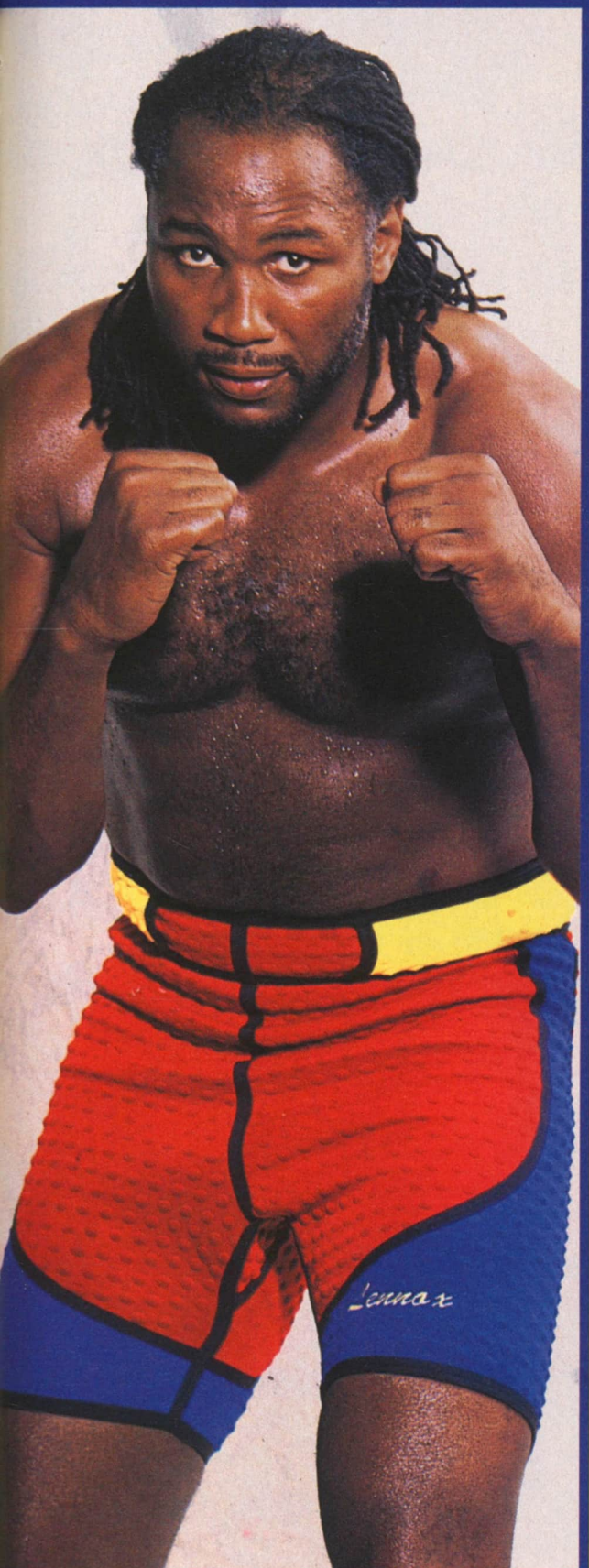
Lewis' strengths: Lewis can do it all: jab and move (David Tua, Evander Holyfield), break opponents systematically (Tommy Morrison, Mike Tyson), demolish them quickly (Razor Ruddock, Andrew Golota, Michael Grant), or battle in the trenches (Ray Mercer). No one can outbox him or control the pace like Lewis does, and he takes very little punishment. He thrives on beating big men. Four years after stopping Bowe to win Olympic gold, Lewis flattened Ruddock and inherited the WBC title. Eleven years on, he's still champion and has made 15 successful defences over three reigns. He's beaten more titleholders and leading contenders than anyone since Larry Holmes.

Lewis' weaknesses: His chin makes him vulnerable, as illustrated by Oliver McCall and Hasim Rahman, neither of whom quite have Foreman's power. He touched down unofficially



Foreman watches Joe Frazier crumble in Jamaica

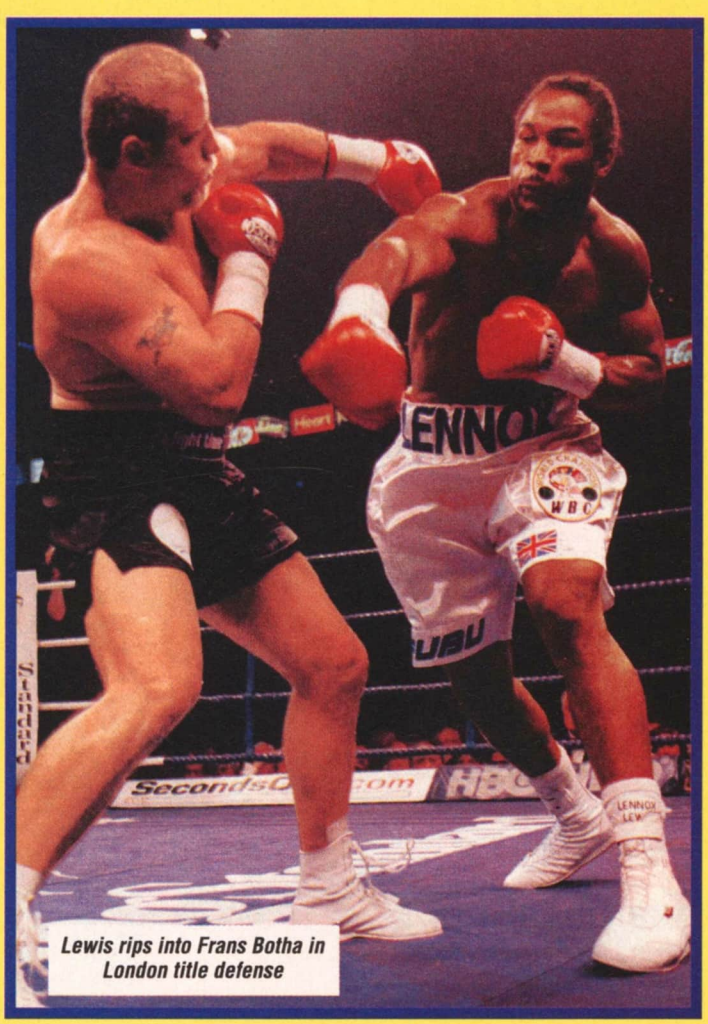
vs. LENNOX LEWIS



against Henry Akinwande and was shaken by Tony Tucker, Frank Bruno, and Shannon Briggs. He's occasionally cavalier and sometimes over-cautious. Now and then, his energy level short-circuits. He can also be unsettled by unpredictable assaults. He struggled in the second fight with an aging Holyfield.

Style matchup: This pits the huge, clubbing hooks and uppercuts of the 6'3", 224-pound Foreman against the tighter jabs and crosses of the 6'5", 245-pound Lewis. Foreman was an attacking fighter, most comfortable going forward. Lewis controls the action from a distance, although he is also dangerous up close with uppercuts.

Outcome: Foreman rushes Lewis to the ropes, swinging heavy hooks. Lewis holds, but George shakes him with an uppercut as the bell rings. After that Lewis boxes off the back foot while circling to his right, using his greater strength to hold Foreman whenever he gets close. Lewis' hand touches the canvas after he takes a right in the sixth, but Foreman is tiring. In the 10th, Foreman swings, but Lewis beats him to it with a right cross followed by a left hook and a right uppercut. Foreman is up at eight, but Lewis ends the fight with a perfectly timed right hand.

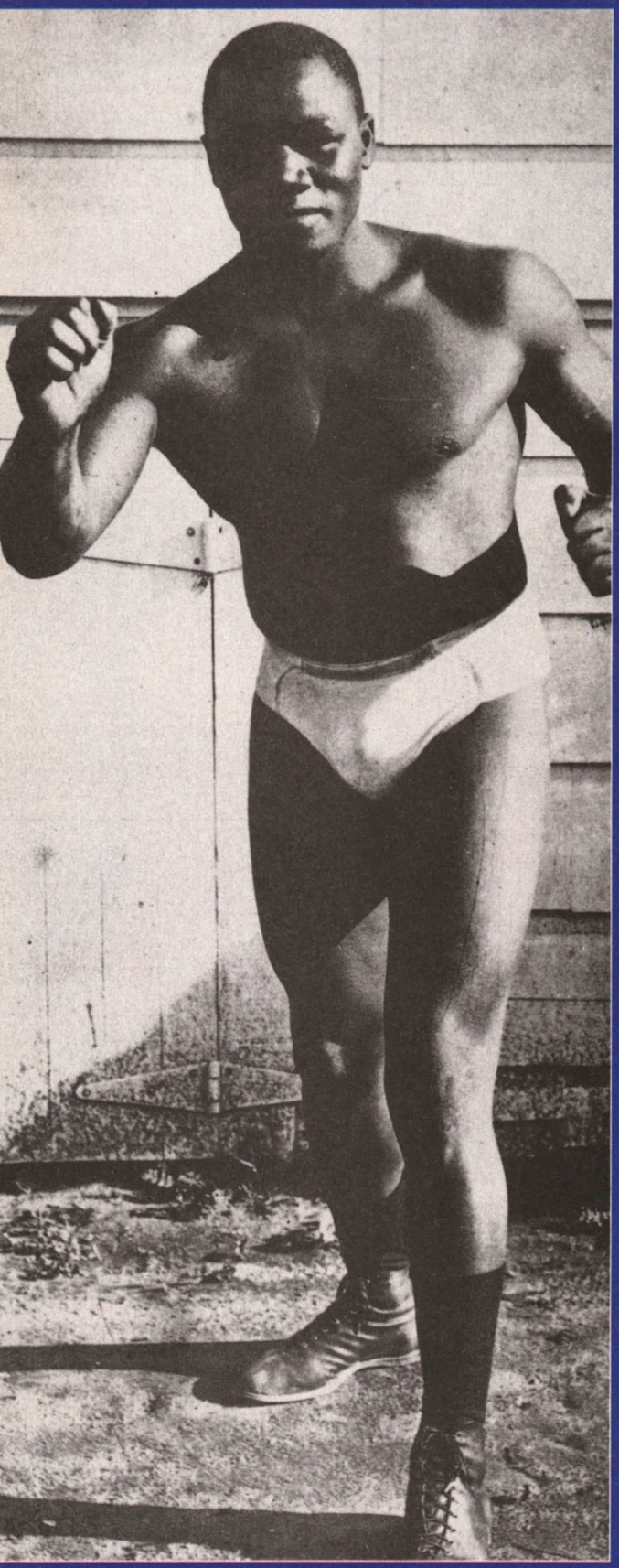


Lewis rips into Frans Botha in London title defense

GEORGE FOREMAN vs. LENNOX LEWIS

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER

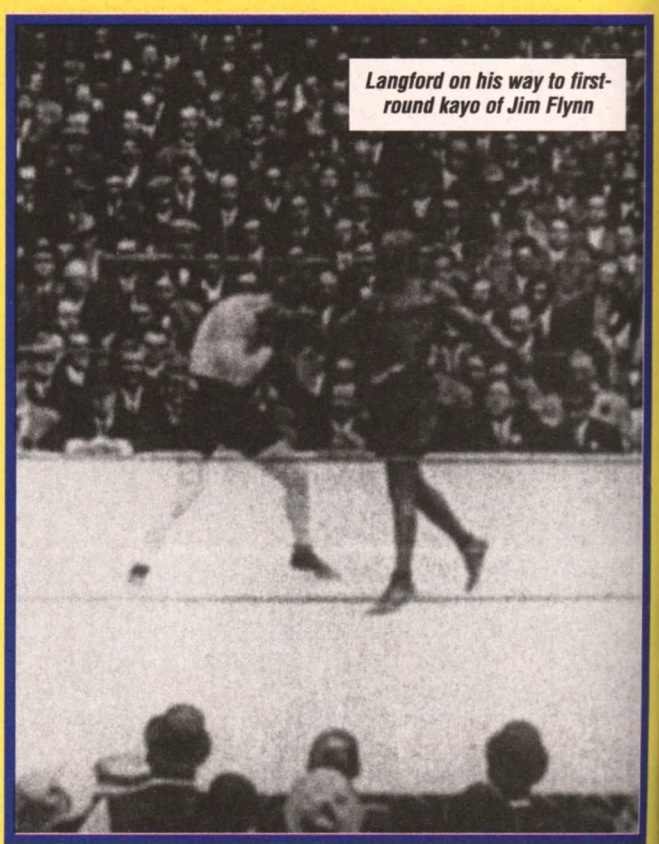
SAM LANGFORD



Bivins' strengths: A smooth boxer with a fast, hard jab, and tight defense, he also had a decent dig when required, stopping several top men, including Archie Moore and Lloyd Marshall. He started at welterweight, beat Charley Burley at middleweight, and was rated by THE RING as top contender at both light heavyweight and heavyweight in 1942. He beat eight world champions, including Ezzard Charles and Moore, but never got a title shot. He had one spell of 27 straight fights without a defeat, broken by a split decision loss to Jersey Joe Walcott.

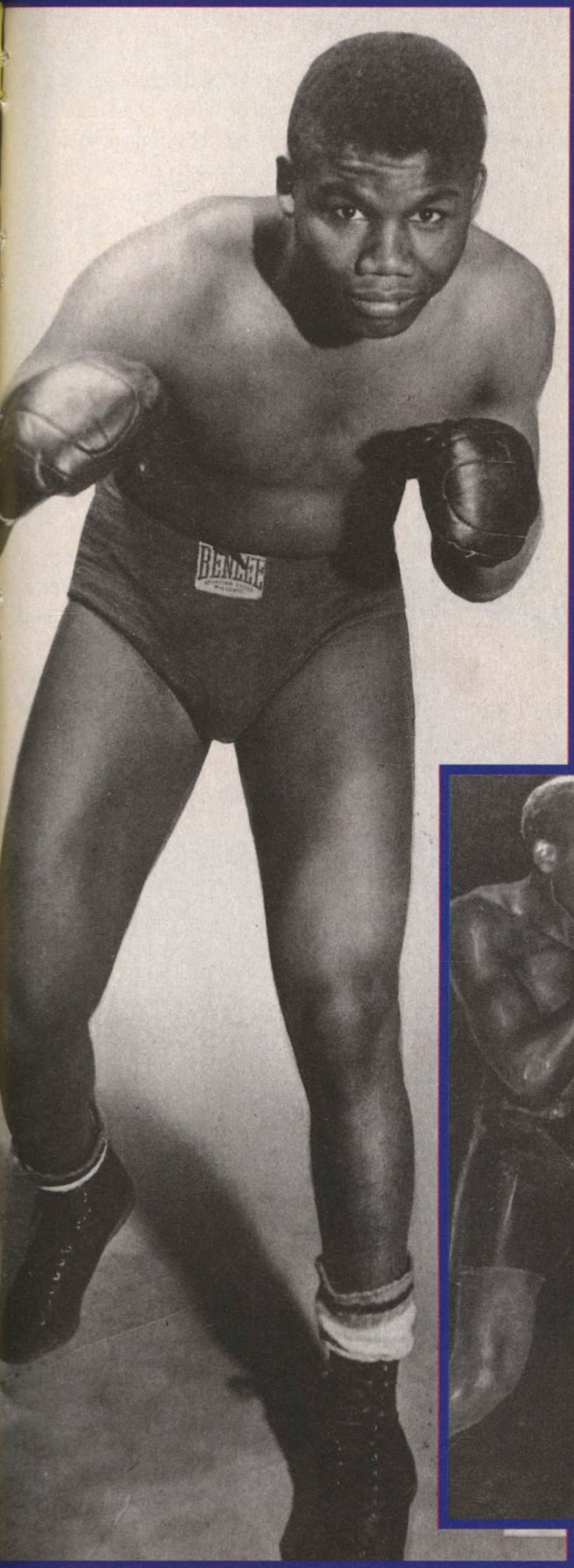
Bivins' weaknesses: Bivins was inconsistent, and there was no sustained spell when he was the best in the world. His 112-fight record shows 25 defeats, and his knockout ratio was a mere 27.6 percent. It's true, he beat several greats, but they beat him more often. Charles, for instance, was a 21-year-old middleweight about to start his Army service when Bivins outpointed him, but he trounced Jimmy in four subsequent bouts. Moore also beat Bivins four times.

Langford's strengths: Short, with broad shoulders and strong, long arms, he was a huge puncher with both fists (115 knockouts in 164 wins), a brilliant defensive boxer, and had a great chin. He had a trick of announcing exactly where in the ring he would deposit opponents and being as good as his word. Langford, who started out at lightweight, beat six world champions from lightweight to light heavyweight, whipped several top heavyweights



Langford on his way to first-round kayo of Jim Flynn

VS. JIMMY BIVINS

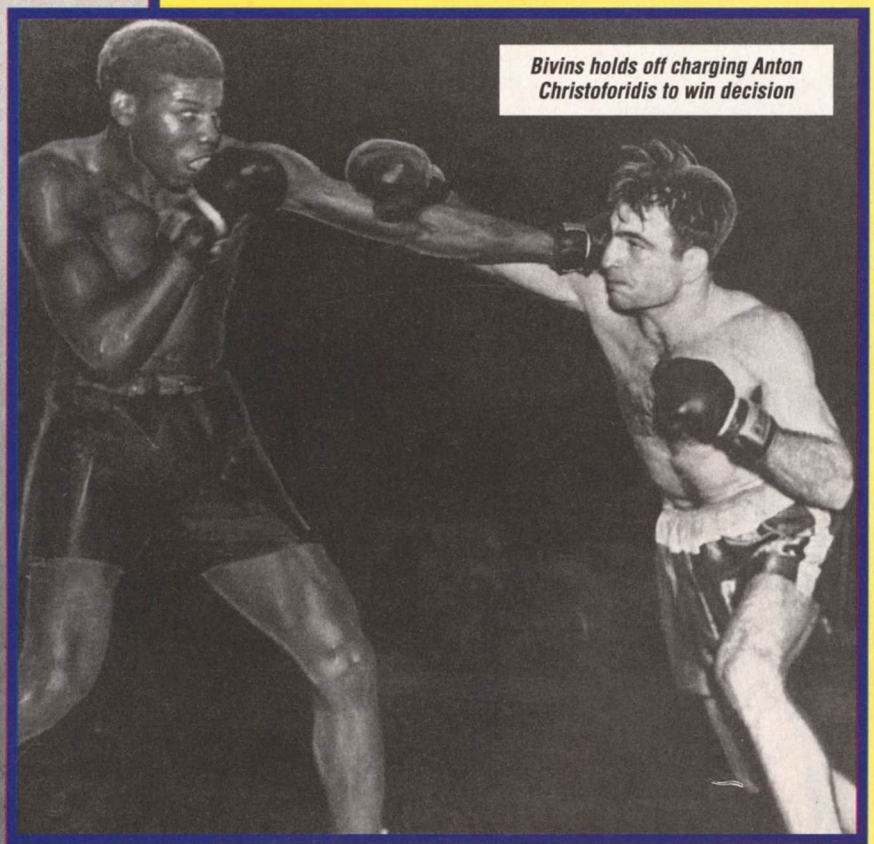


while still a middleweight, and had a 57-fight unbeaten spell (1906-'11), but never got a title shot. He outclassed huge Jim Jeffries in sparring, but many avoided him, including Jack Dempsey, who admitted, "Sam probably would have knocked me out."

Langford's weaknesses: He fought in an era of clinch-filled 20-rounders, before combination punching was an integral part of the game. This would place him at a disadvantage against the quicker-moving, busier boxers of Bivins' era. Contrary to legend, his size could also be a drawback against the best heavyweights. The 187-pound Jack Johnson dropped and outboxed the 158-pound Langford, and the 210-pound Harry Wills beat him eight out of 10 times (with 8 no-decisions).

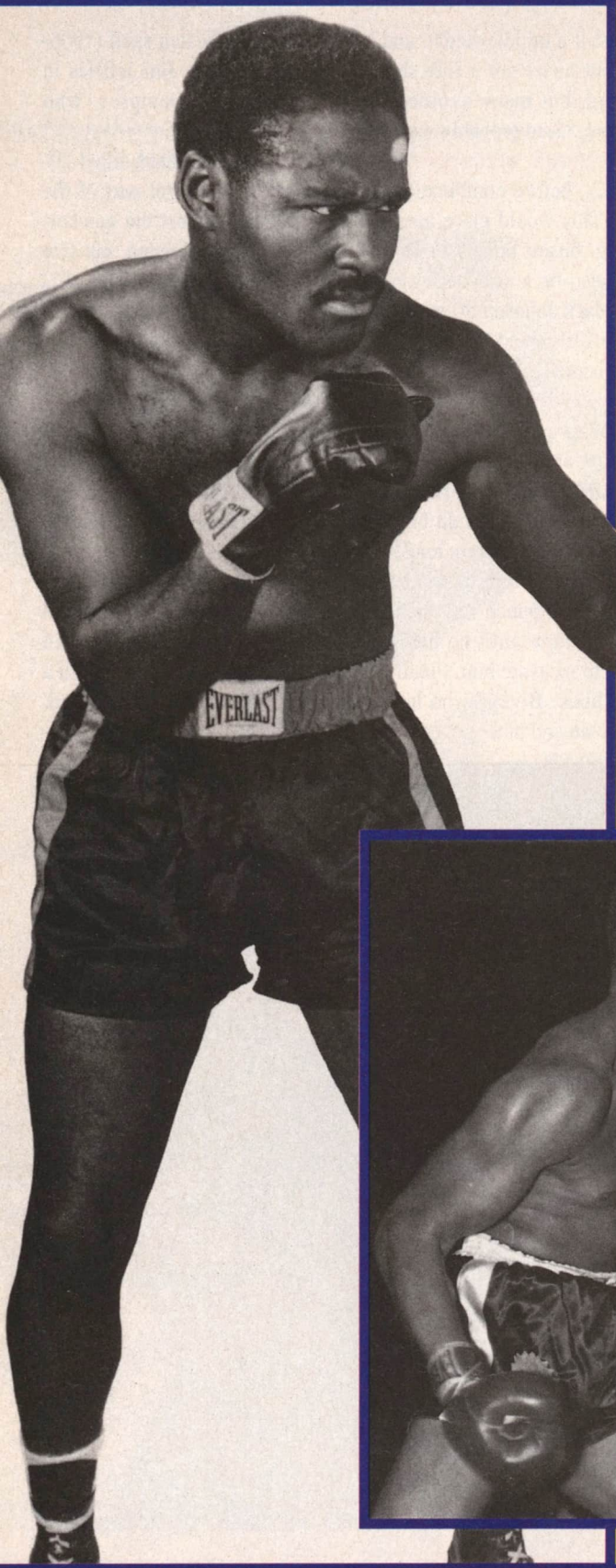
Style matchup: The 5'10", 180-pound Bivins was a tight, careful boxer with good footwork who liked to pick up the points with his jab, now and then throwing combinations. The 5'7", 170-pound Langford liked to work up close, where his immense strength enabled him to rough up bigger men, but he could also use his 75-inch reach to work from long range.

Outcome: Bivins boxes behind his jab, showing more movement and a higher punch rate than Langford is accustomed to. Langford bides his time until he has worked out Bivins' rhythm, and then begins to measure him. Finally, in round six, Langford strikes with a single hook. Bivins, who later admits he's never been hit so hard, goes down and out.



Bivins holds off charging Anton Christoforidis to win decision

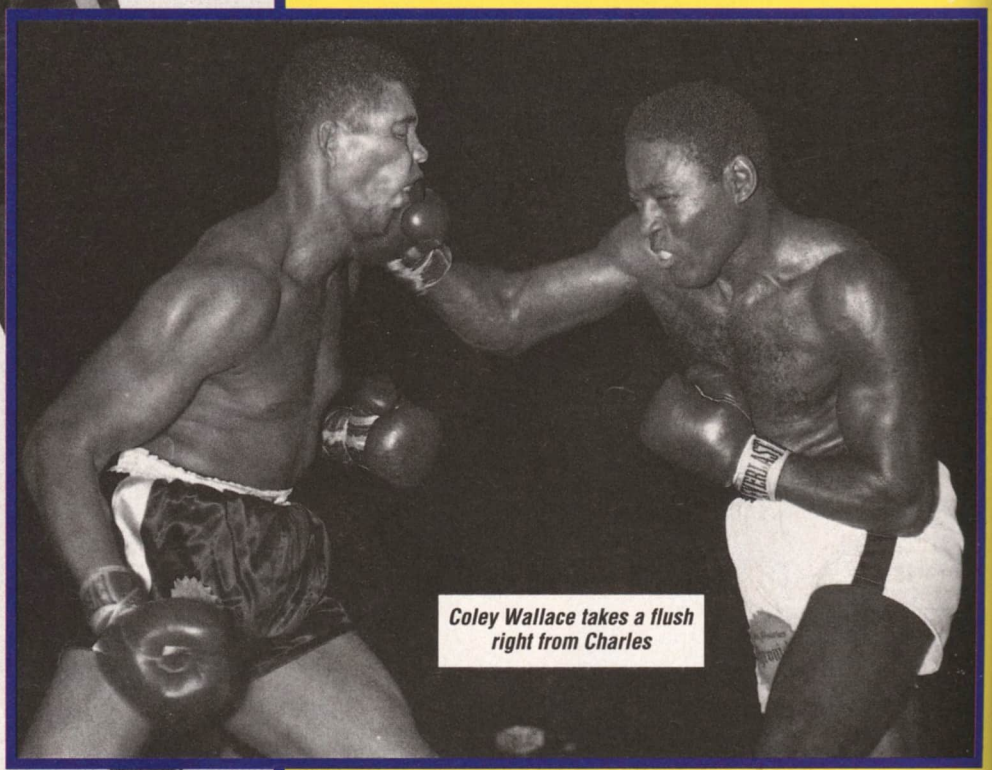
EZZARD CHARLES



Charles' strengths: Charles was a brilliant boxer, with quick feet, hands, and reflexes, beautiful balance, impeccable technique, and respectable power. Historian Lew Eskin rated him above Ray Robinson as the best fighter he saw in the 1950s. Charles twice beat Charlie Burley as a 20-year-old middleweight. After World War II, he racked up a 40-1 streak—his only setback (subsequently avenged) a split decision loss 11 days after his previous fight. He went 9-0 against four world light heavyweight champions, including three easy wins over a peak Archie Moore. He then outboxed and dropped Jersey Joe Walcott to win the heavyweight title and won 13 out of 15 rounds against a faded Joe Louis, who outweighed him by 34 pounds.

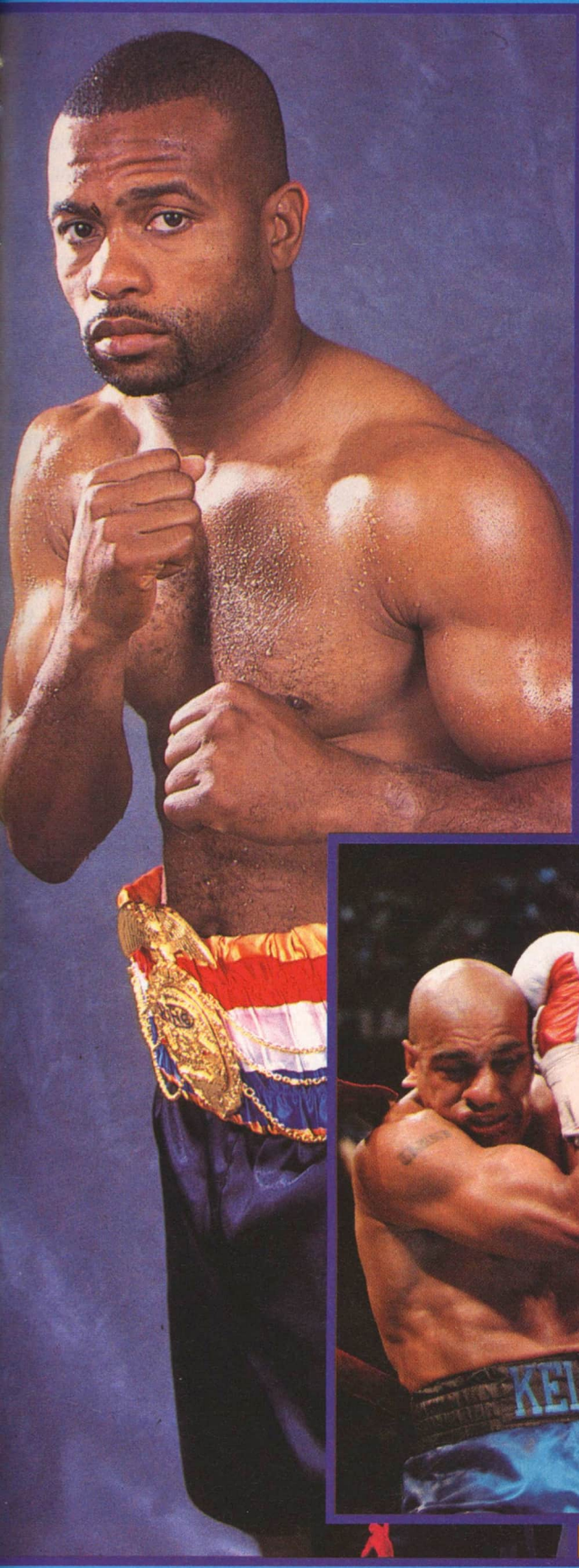
Charles' weaknesses: He lacked Jones' stylistic versatility and was also not quite as consistent, partly because he sometimes neglected hard training. At his peak in 1948, he killed the 20-year-old Sam Baroudi in the ring and was never the same again—his dedication, punching power, and "killer" instinct suffered. By 30, he was in decline, losing to men he'd previously beaten.

Jones' strengths: Jones does things no boxer attempted before. Whether jabbing from a distance, hitting and slipping from middle range, or throwing explosive combinations on the inside, his mastery is phenomenal, and he has the power to take a man out with a single head or body blow. He beat future



Coley Wallace takes a flush right from Charles

vs. ROY JONES

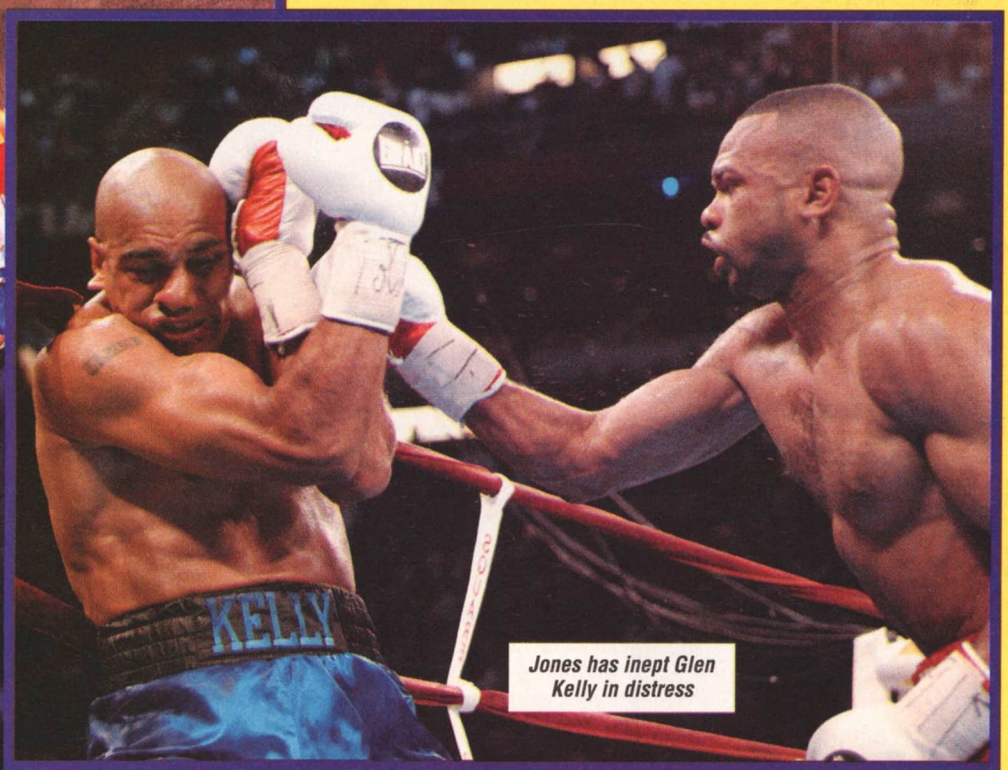


world middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins for the IBF title, then another near-great, James Toney, for the IBF super middleweight title, before unifying the light heavyweight title. He gave away 33 pounds to outclass John Ruiz for the WBA heavyweight title. He has beaten 13 titleholders.

Jones' weaknesses: Despite his calculated gamble against Ruiz, Jones' career is marked by caution. He takes hit-and-not-be-hit to an extreme and may not be as invincible as he seems. Montell Griffin used his strength and wiles to outhustle him for a spell in their first fight, and Lou Del Valle dropped him. Jones insisted Sugarboy Malinga and Merqui Sosa come in under their normal fighting weights, refused to travel abroad to fight Dariusz Michalczewski, and backed out of a promised fight against Buster Douglas.

Style matchup: The 6' Charles has an advantage of more than an inch in height and four inches in reach. He has the more classic style, usually boxing from long range behind his jab, while moving in to throw rapid-fire combinations. Jones moves in and out of range, throwing surprise single punches or blistering barrages of hooks and uppercuts off the ropes.

Outcome: Charles pumps out snappy jabs, but Jones slips most of them and comes in with lightning hooks and lead rights. In the fifth, Charles catches Jones with a hard right cross to the jaw, and down he goes. Thereafter, Jones begins to use own jab more and, in the ninth, drops Charles with a lightning left hook. They go all out in the 15th, with Jones shading it through a final 15-punch blitz off the ropes to take a split decision.



Jones has inept Glen Kelly in distress

ARCHIE MOORE vs

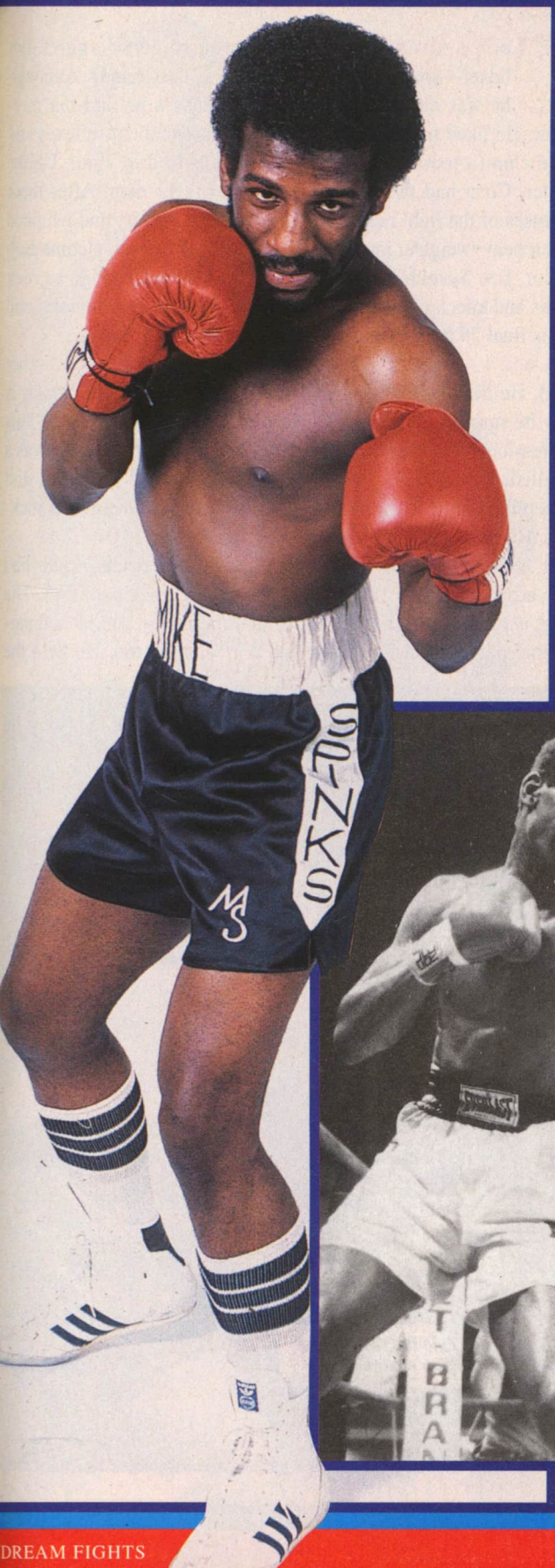
Moore's strengths: A clever boxer whose cross-arm defense was hard to penetrate, he was also a big puncher, scoring more knockouts than any other boxer in history (141 from 194 wins) and had the strength to handle heavyweights. He would bide his time and make each punch count, and he was an expert spoiler. He was 36 when finally granted a world title shot, yet held it for more than eight years, making 11 defenses. He had one 55-fight spell when the only men to beat him were Rocky Marciano and Floyd Patterson. He had a total of 229 fights compared to Spinks' 32.

Moore's weaknesses: The "Old Mongoose" could be beaten with speed. The seven knockout losses and many knockdowns on his record show he could also be caught and put away—sometimes by smaller men. Contrary to the myth that he was the world's best light heavy for a decade before winning the title, he suffered 18 losses and draws in those 10 years, including three defeats against Ezzard Charles, the last of them a one-sided eighth-round knockout with a right cross.

Spinks' strengths: Spinks' jerky style might not have been aesthetically pleasing, but he never lost at light heavyweight. He could jab, move, and mix it up. He had fast hands and serious power and was always in shape. He's too often judged by his loss to Mike Tyson and his controversial victories over Larry Holmes. Yet he deserved the first win over the master-jabbing world heavyweight champion (who, seven years on, trounced Ray Mercer) and was even more impressive in annihilating the heavy-

Moore socks Joey Maxim with a left in 1952 title bout

MICHAEL SPINKS

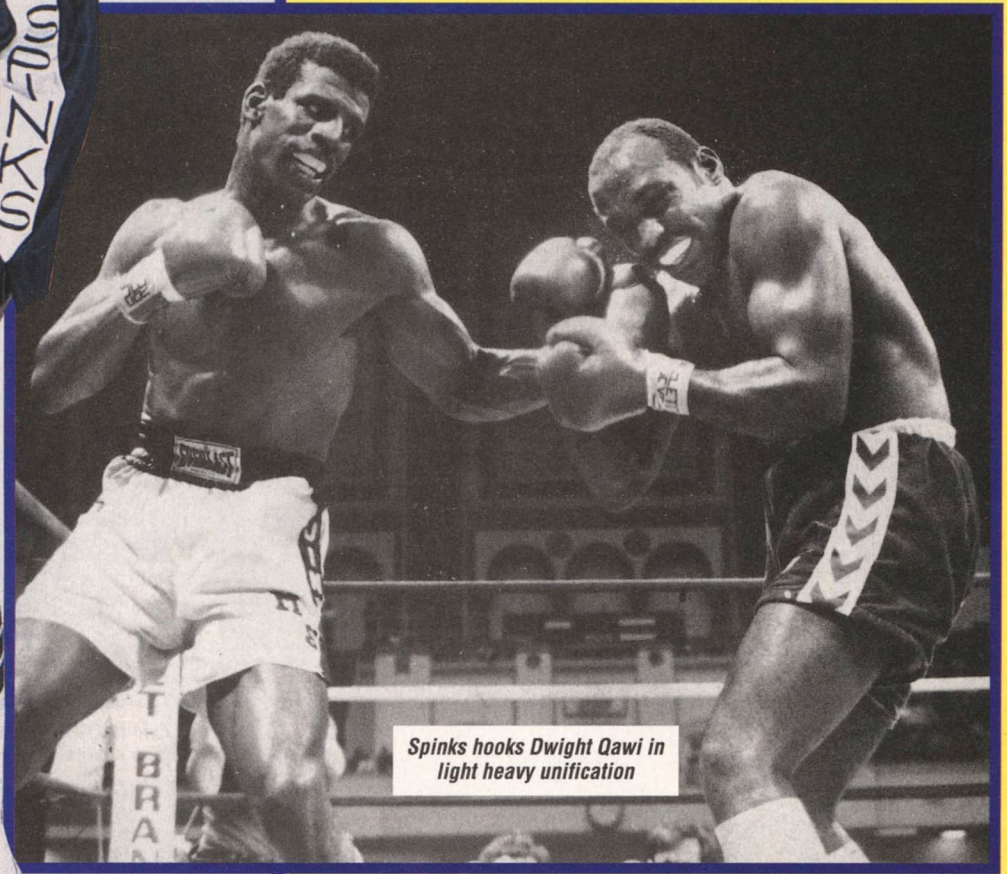


hooking Gerry Cooney. Spinks unified the 175-pound title, establishing a light heavyweight record of 27-0 (19), with 11 of those victories coming in title fights, including wins over the canny, powerful Dwight Muhammad Qawi and the clever, sharp-hitting Eddie Mustafa Muhammad.

Spinks' weaknesses: When you watched the skittish Spinks, you did not get the impression of greatness. Mustafa Muhammad gave him a tight argument, and Spinks refused to fight him a second time when Mustafa came in fractionally overweight. He benefited from a robbery against 36-year-old Holmes in their rematch, and two years later Tyson flattened him with his big hooks in quick time.

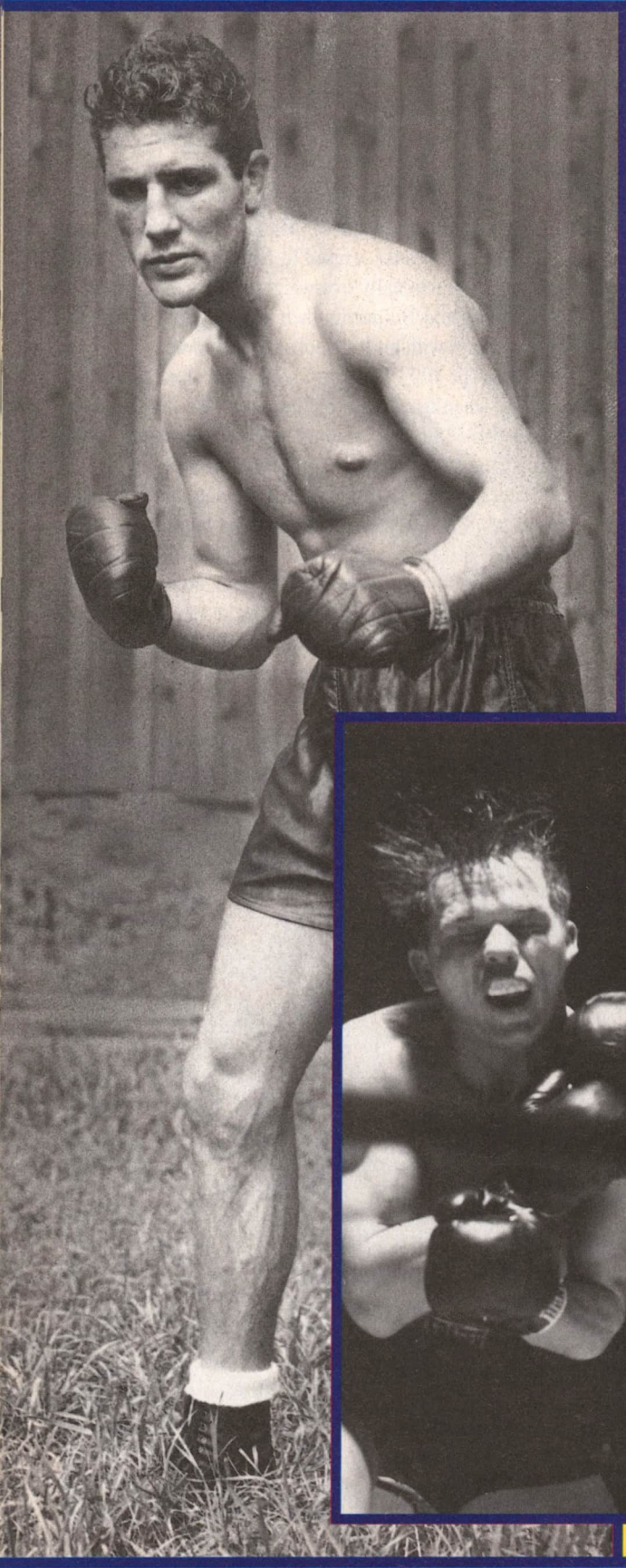
Style matchup: The 6'2" Spinks moved more than the 5'11" Moore, particularly when faced with big punchers. He threw lots of punches, working behind his jab. Moore conserved his energy, with his head tucked behind his crossed arms as he stalked forward.

Outcome: Spinks comes out jabbing and moving, and although he seldom penetrates Moore's guard with anything big, he's picking up points. Moore has difficulty with Spinks' speed, but in the eighth he times a perfect right. Spinks grabs, but Moore is on him, rocking him with rights and left hooks. Spinks survives, and in the 11th, he decks Moore with his "Spinks Jinx." Moore presses for the rest of the fight, but can't close the gap, and Spinks wins a close unanimous decision.



Spinks hooks Dwight Qawi in light heavy unification

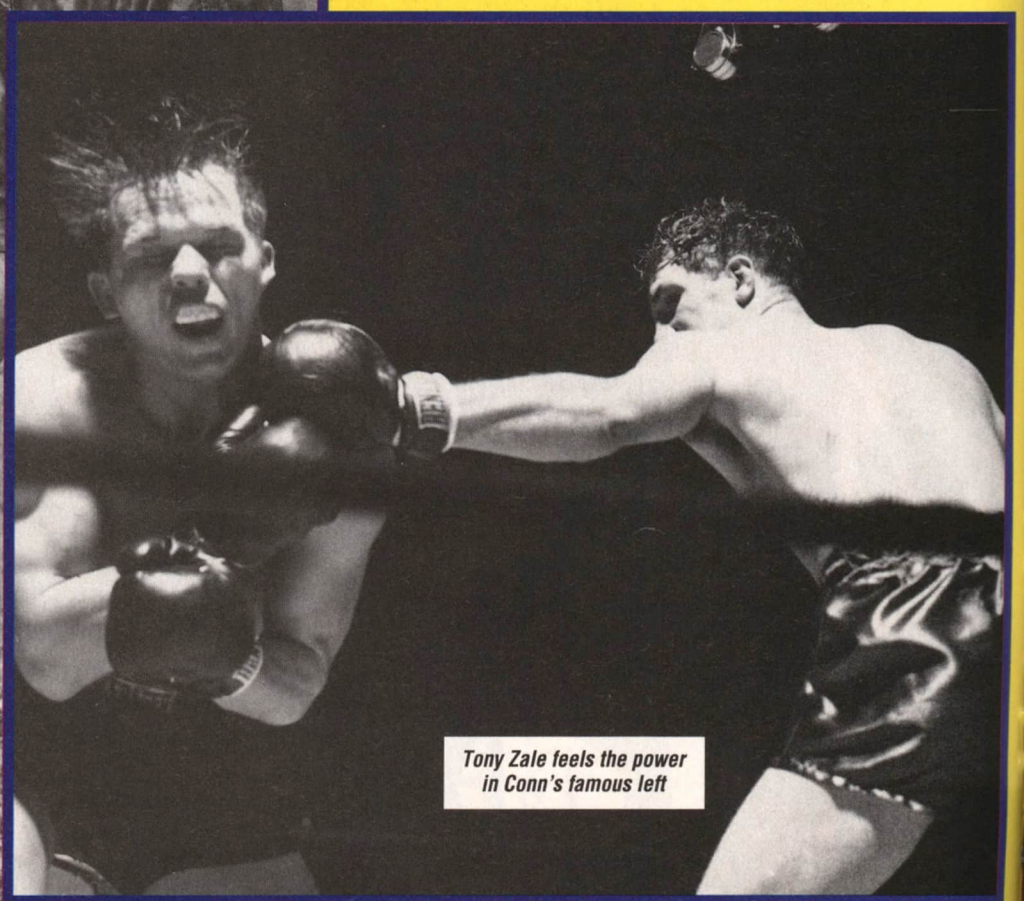
BILLY CONN vs.



Conn's strengths: He was an outstanding aggressive boxer—snappy jab, fast feet, quick, busy hands. Although he was elusive, he was by no means a hit-and-run merchant. He liked to mix it up, relying on his excellent reflexes and good chin (it took Joe Louis 15 clean shots to drop him). Unlike Foster, Conn had the toughness to beat bigger men. After three defenses of the light heavyweight title, he moved up and whipped seven heavyweights, including past and future Louis victims Bob Pastor, Lee Savold, and Al McCoy. He hit hard enough to rock Louis and knock out McCoy. He beat seven world champions, and in his final 26 fights, the only man to beat him was Louis.

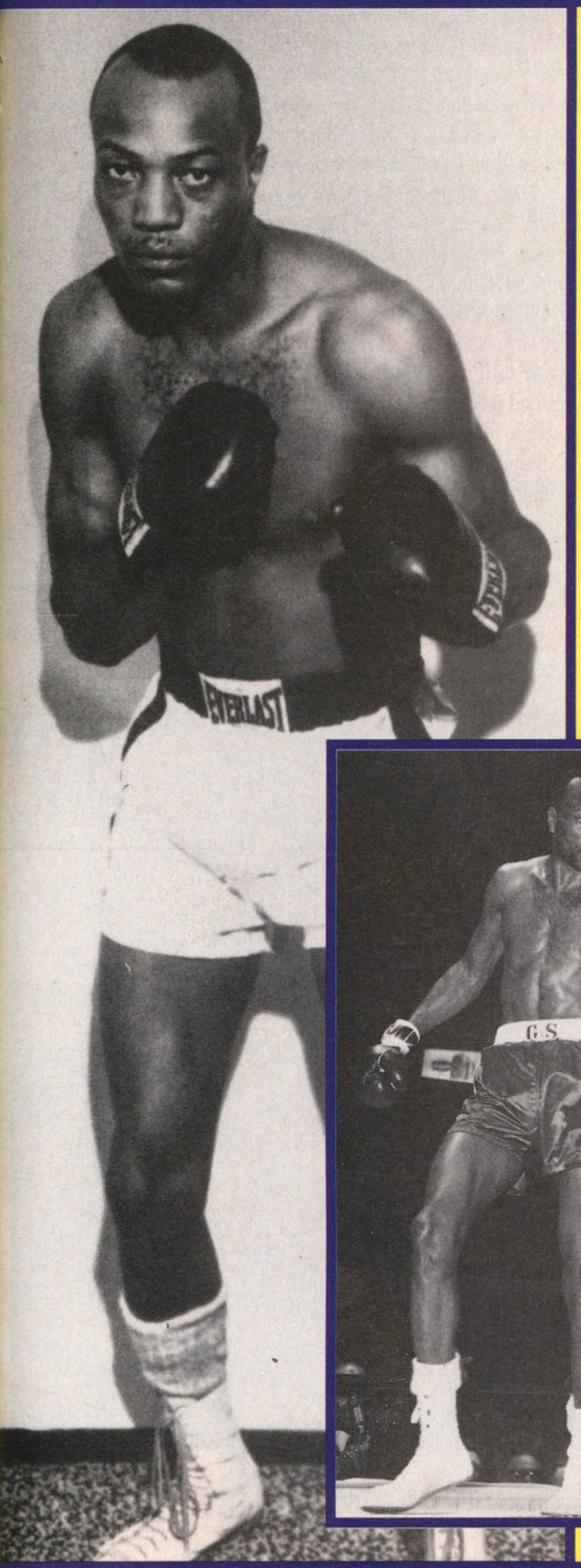
Conn's weaknesses: As Conn readily admitted, he had a hot head. He liked to trade, even if that meant taking risks, which is how he squandered his lead in the 13th round against Louis. This aggression could prove fatal against a banger like Foster. He was a smallish light heavyweight (weighing around 170 pounds) and lacked the power to stop most of his opponents (a mere 14 knockouts in 75 fights, an 18.7 percent stoppage ratio).

Foster's strengths: At 6'3", with a 78-inch reach, Foster had size advantages over all his light heavyweight opponents. His long, hard, accurate jab was one of the finest ever, and he had paralyzing power in his left hook and a great right too. He held the



Tony Zale feels the power in Conn's famous left

BOB FOSTER

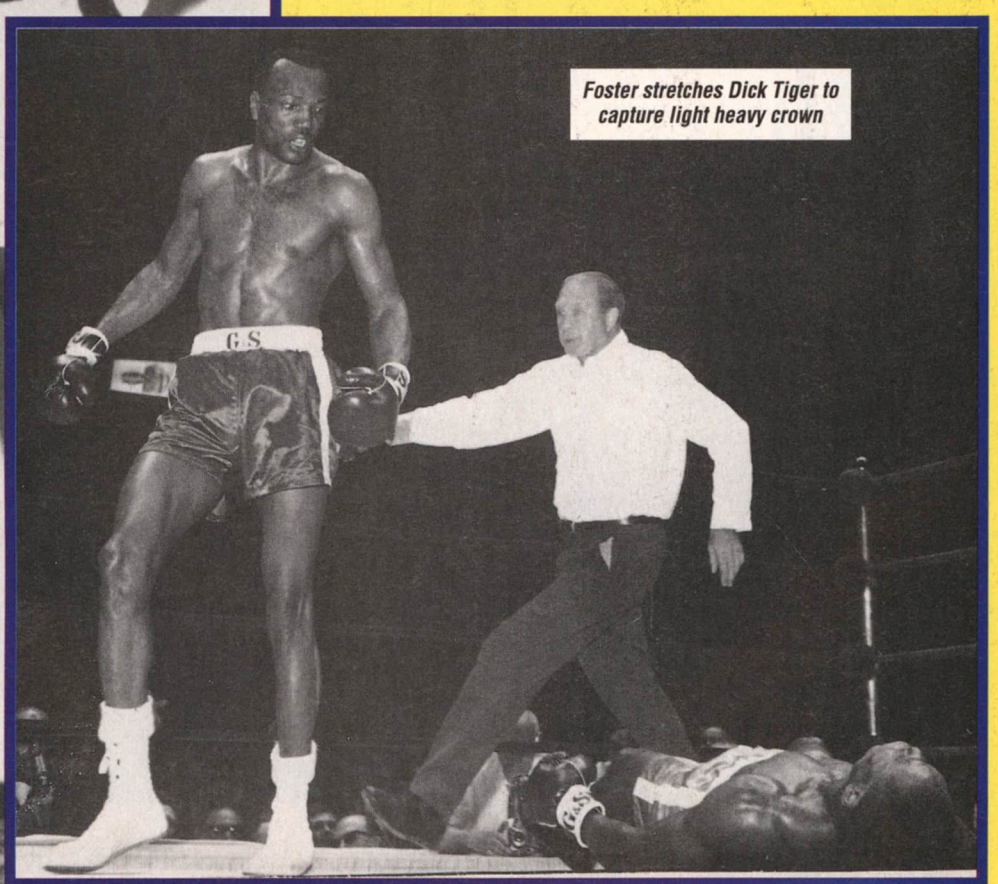


world title for more than six years, making 14 defenses. Of his 56 wins, 46 came via the short route. He was also a fine defensive boxer whose record against quick moving, elusive men was exemplary—Mike Quarry, Mark Tessman, and Chris Finnegan were all knocked out, while Foster outpointed Ray Anderson and Pierre Fourie (twice).

Foster's weaknesses: Despite his size, Foster was not particularly strong and his chin was shaky (six stoppage defeats out of eight losses). Every time he took on a decent heavyweight, he was beaten—Doug Jones, Ernie Terrell, Joe Frazier, and Muhammad Ali all stopped him, while Zora Folley outpointed him. Although his record at light heavyweight was outstanding, he was troubled by the speed of the 5'10", 167-pound Fourie, and in his final defense was held to a draw by aggressive Jorge Ahumada.

Style matchup: Foster liked to keep a good distance, shooting out that snake-like jab to set up his big right. Conn, who was three inches shorter and several pounds lighter, used his excellent footwork to move in and out, throwing plenty of quick combinations.

Outcome: Conn picks up the points, using his speed to mount lightning assaults before dancing out of trouble, although he has to take several hard jabs along the way. In the final round, he wobbles Foster with a stiff right and starts to trade, but gets caught with a massive left hook. Conn rises at nine and survives to take a unanimous decision.



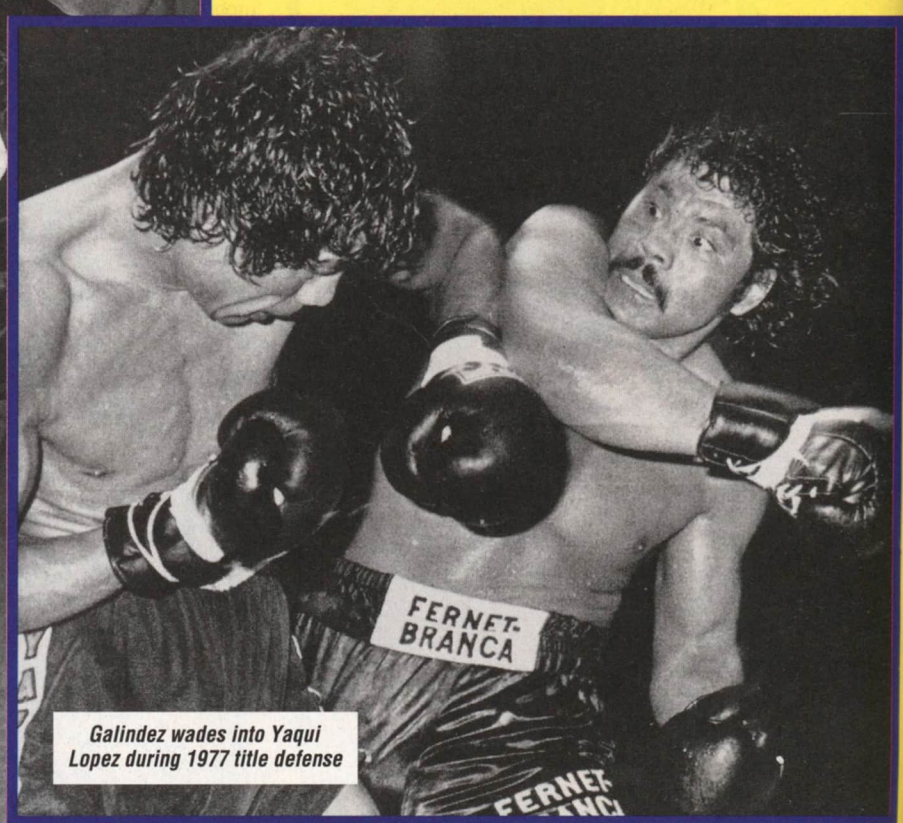
Foster stretches Dick Tiger to capture light heavy crown

VICTOR GALINDEZ VS

Galindez' strengths: He was a strong, marauding fighter who liked to bang with his short, heavy hooks on the inside, but as he showed against Kosie Smith in 1976, he could also box when required. He had a sound chin and a big heart, as demonstrated in coming back from the brink of defeat to stop Richie Kates in the 15th round. Between 1972 and '78, he went unbeaten in 43 fights. As WBA titleholder he travelled the world, defending 10 times (including wins over Yaqui Lopez and Eddie Mustafa Muhammad) and then regaining it by avenging his defeat against Mike Rossman.

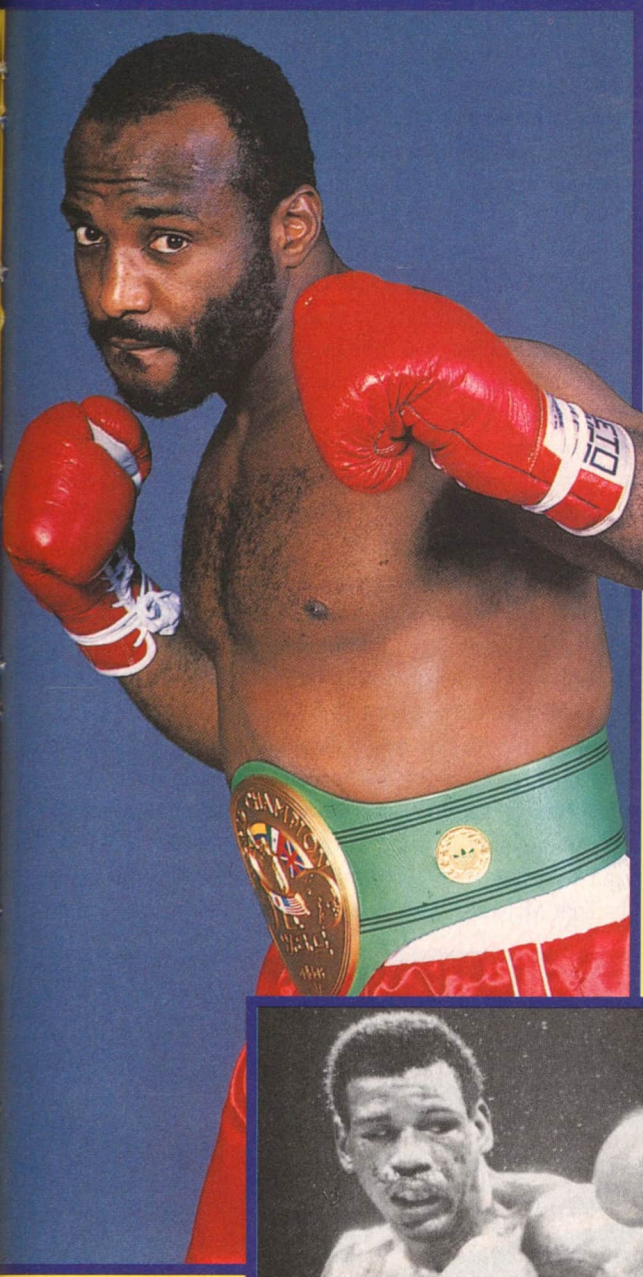
Galindez' weaknesses: At 5'9", with short arms, he had trouble with taller, quicker moving boxers such as Pierre Fourie, Kates, and Rossman. He was also prone to cuts and struggled with the weight (despite starting out at middleweight), mainly because of his partying lifestyle. He never fought rival champions like John Conteh, and several of his wins were questionable (particularly his split decision victory in his second fight with Fourie and his majority verdict over Jesse Burnett). His punching power was possibly overrated—a sub-50 percent knockout rate in 70 fights (that included nine losses and four draws).

Qawi's strengths: He was an extremely powerful, hard-hitting light heavyweight, and was also a deceptively clever boxer with a



Galindez wades into Yaqui Lopez during 1977 title defense

DWIGHT MUHAMMAD QAWI

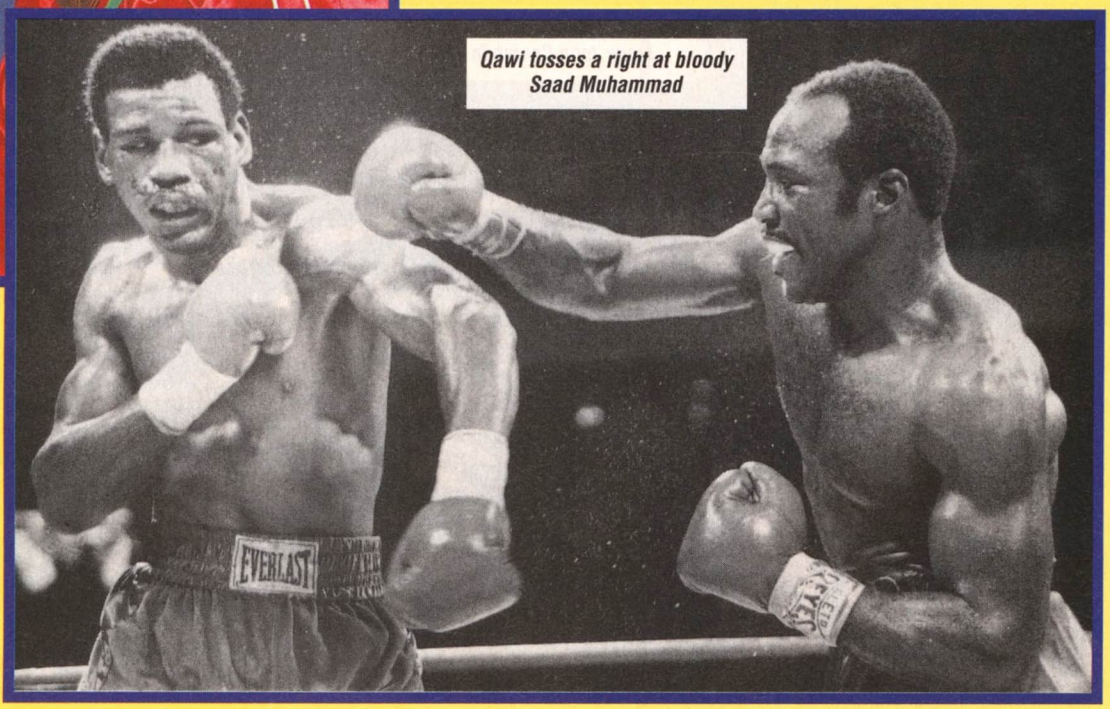


solid chin. He would work his way in behind his high guard, slipping punches and then banging with those strong arms, particularly his left hook. Qawi didn't have the benefit of an amateur career, and first learned the game in prison. But in a four-year span, he went 18-0 (12), beating elite fighters like Mike Rossman, James Scott, Jerry Martin, Eddie Davis, and Matthew Saad Muhammad (twice). He later won the WBA cruiserweight title, defending it against former world heavyweight champion Leon Spinks before losing it to Evander Holyfield on a close nod after an intense 15-round war. In all, he beat five titleholders.

Qawi's weaknesses: At 5'6", he was always considerably shorter than his opponents. Spinks used his advantages in speed and height to outbox him, dropping him along the way, while Holyfield was able to outwork him the first time around and then stop him in the return. Qawi's eating habits and his lifestyle more generally contributed to his move up to cruiserweight, and later heavyweight, and exacerbated his decline.

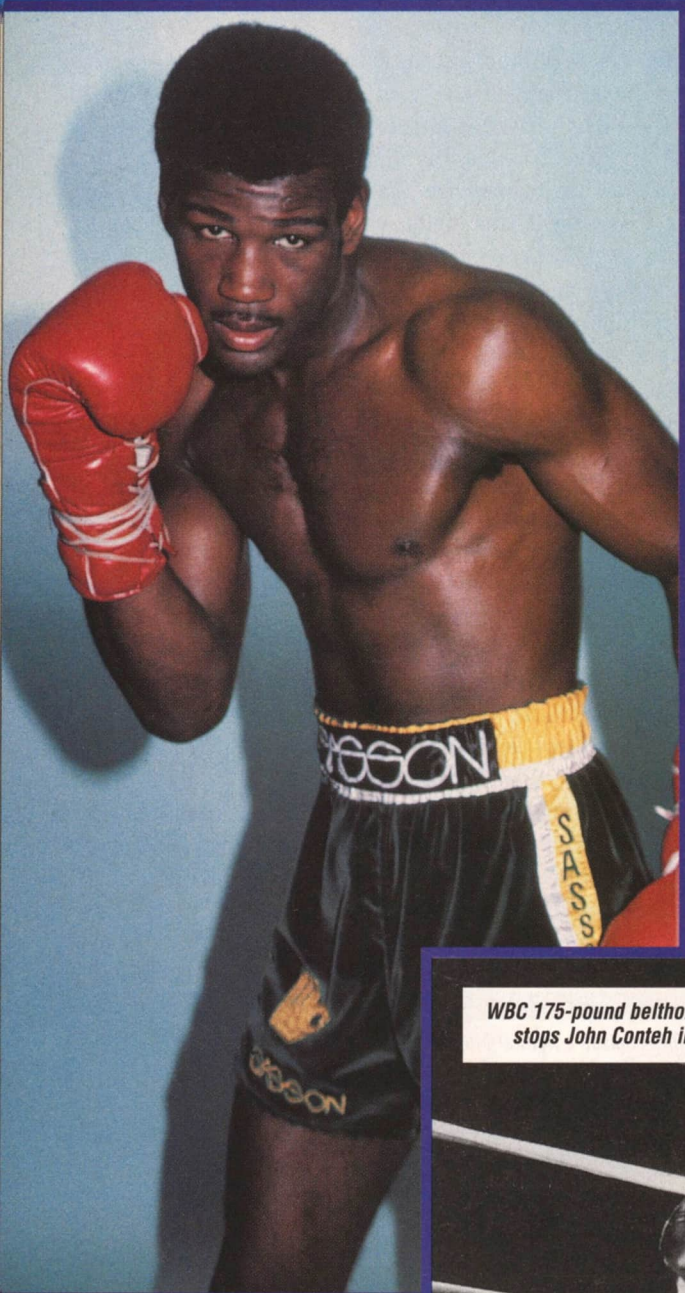
Style matchup: Both men were aggressive fighters who fought from a pronounced crouch. Galindez was at his best in a two-fisted tear-up. He would move forward relentlessly, throwing lots of leather. Qawi could also bang away up close, but was equally adept at boxing from longer range.

Outcome: In the early rounds, Galindez attacks relentlessly, but is surprised to find himself driven back by Qawi's greater strength and power. After being cut in the 10th round, Galindez pours it on, but walks into a heavy left hook and goes down. His face is a mess, and the fight is stopped in the 11th.



Qawi tosses a right at bloody Saad Muhammad

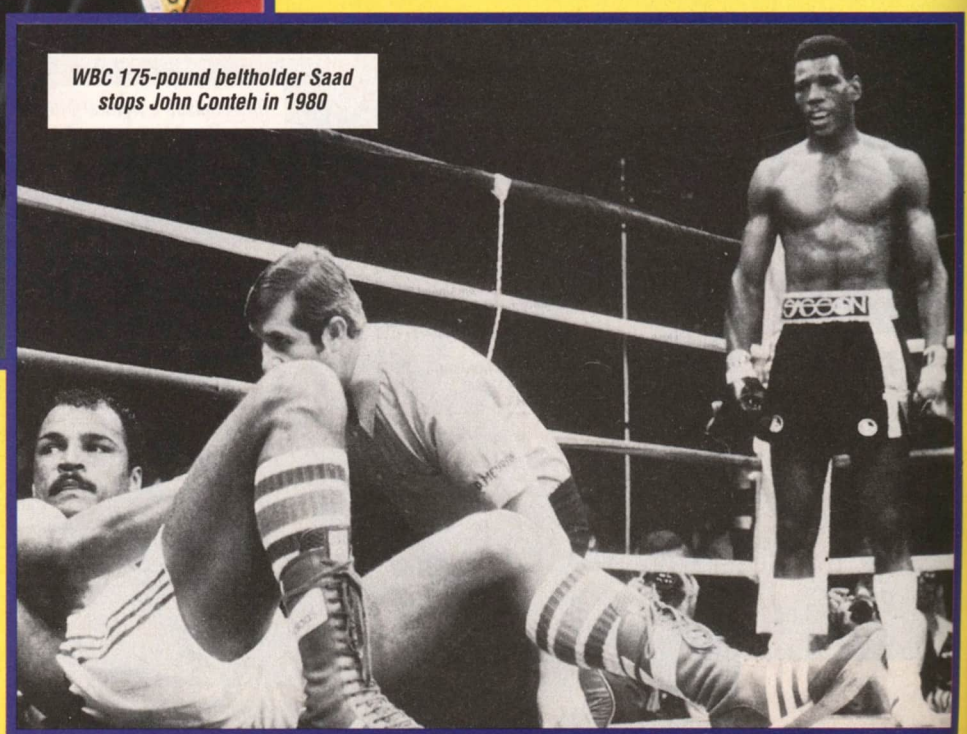
MATTHEW SAAD MUHAMMAD



Saad Muhammad's strengths: He was one of the most compelling fighters ever: aggressive, with barrel loads of guts, serious power in both hands, and fantastic recuperative powers. He loved to fight. In his prime, when he won 18 straight against the best in the world, he always managed to claw his way back from disaster. He overcame slick boxers like John Conteh and Richie Kates and bangers like Jerry Martin and Marvin Johnson. His 14th-round victory over Yaqui Lopez was THE RING's Fight of the Year for 1980, and the eighth round, in which Saad rallied back from a terrific beating, was Round of the Year. He defended his WBC title eight times and beat six titlists.

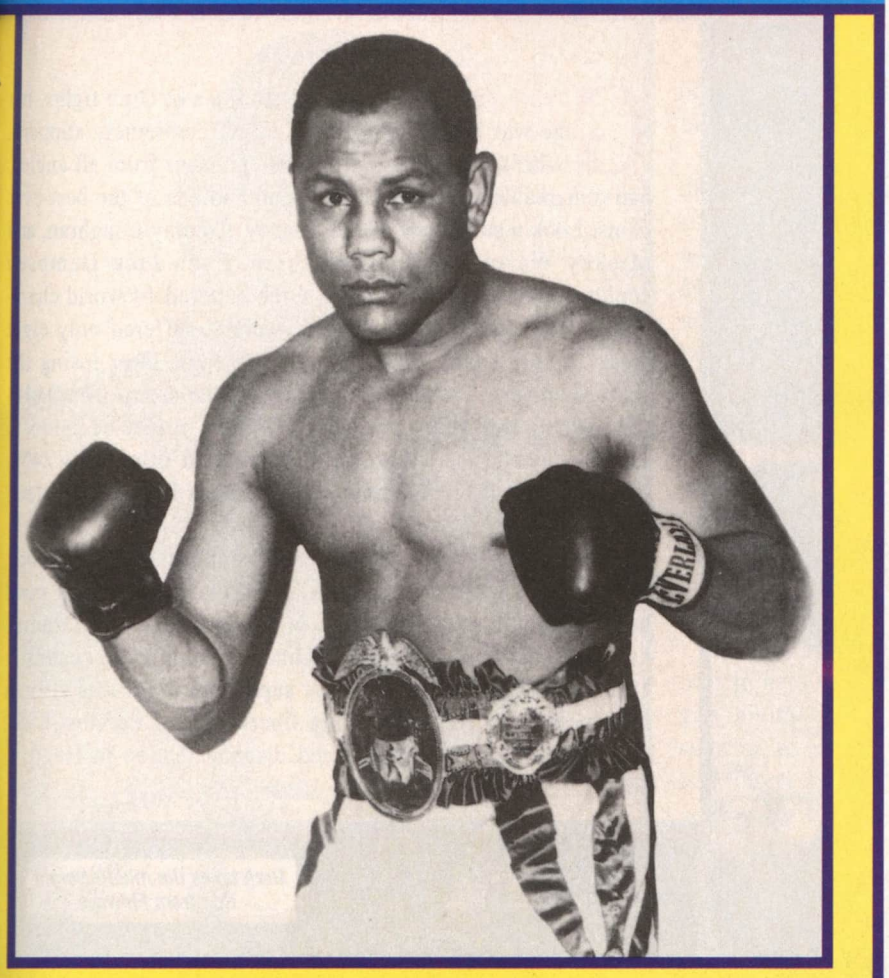
Saad Muhammad's weaknesses: His defense was leaky, which meant that most all of his big fights were wars. He took plenty of punishment and was frequently cut and hurt. He was already past his best by age 27. He had trouble with skilled boxers, particularly if they could whack a bit. He split two fights with Marvin Camel, was controversially outpointed by Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, and scraped a hairline decision over a declining John Conteh the first time. Qawi outmuscled and outboxed him, stopping him twice, after which Saad went into freefall, ending up with 16 losses and three draws on his 58-fight record.

Torres' strengths: He was a slick, quick combination puncher with a sharp jab. His timing and accuracy added to his power, with 29 of his 41 wins coming inside the distance, and he had the speed and defensive ability to avoid much punishment. He broke Willie Pastrano with bodyshots to win the title, then stopped the heavyweight Tom McNeeley and made three title defenses before drop-



WBC 175-pound beltholder Saad stops John Conteh in 1980

vs. JOSE TORRES



ping two close verdicts to Dick Tiger. He retired at 33 with only three defeats in 45 fights.

Torres' weaknesses: He was stopped in five by middleweight contender Florentino Fernandez, 22 months before winning the title, and was still fighting at middleweight less than a year before winning the world title. He lacked the strength of bigger light heavyweights. He was at his peak when he defended the world title against the 167-pound, 37-year-old former world middleweight champion Tiger (who had just been outboxed by welterweight champion Emile Griffith), but the tenacious Tiger outhustled him and then repeated the feat six months later, suggesting that Torres was vulnerable to strong men who could drive him back with sustained pressure.

Style matchup: Torres fought behind his Cus D'Amato-inspired peek-a-boo guard, moving fluidly around the ring while throwing flashy combinations. Saad Muhammad, a naturally bigger man, didn't waste time dancing around. He always went straight into attack mode.

Outcome: Torres has it all his own way at first, picking up the points behind his jab, raising lumps, and opening cuts above both eyes. In round six, he lands a seven-punch combination to drop Muhammad, but Saad is turned on by his own blood and rallies to find his way into the fight. Torres starts to wilt against Saad's greater strength and power, and after taking two counts, Torres is stopped in the ninth.

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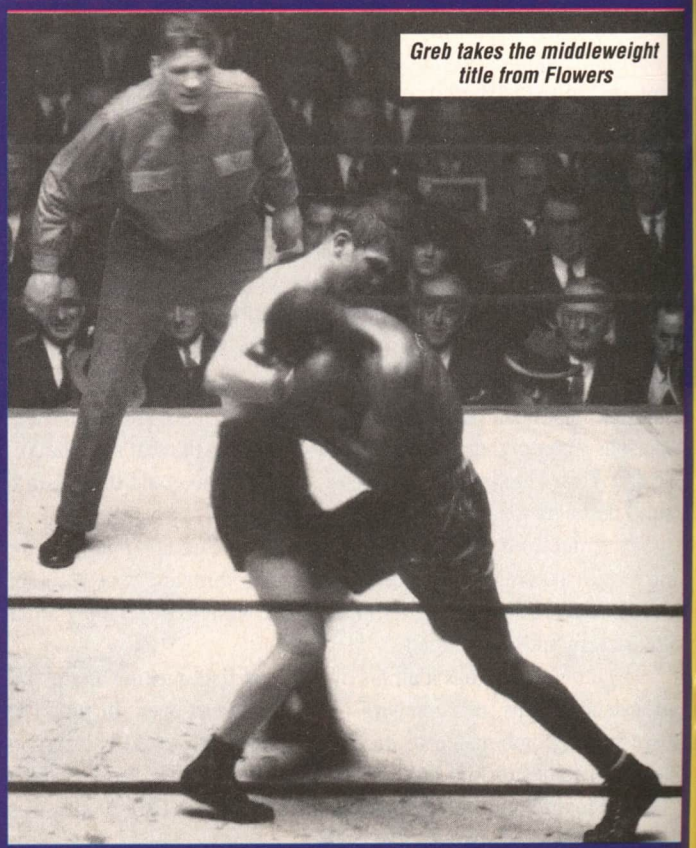
HARRY GREB vs.

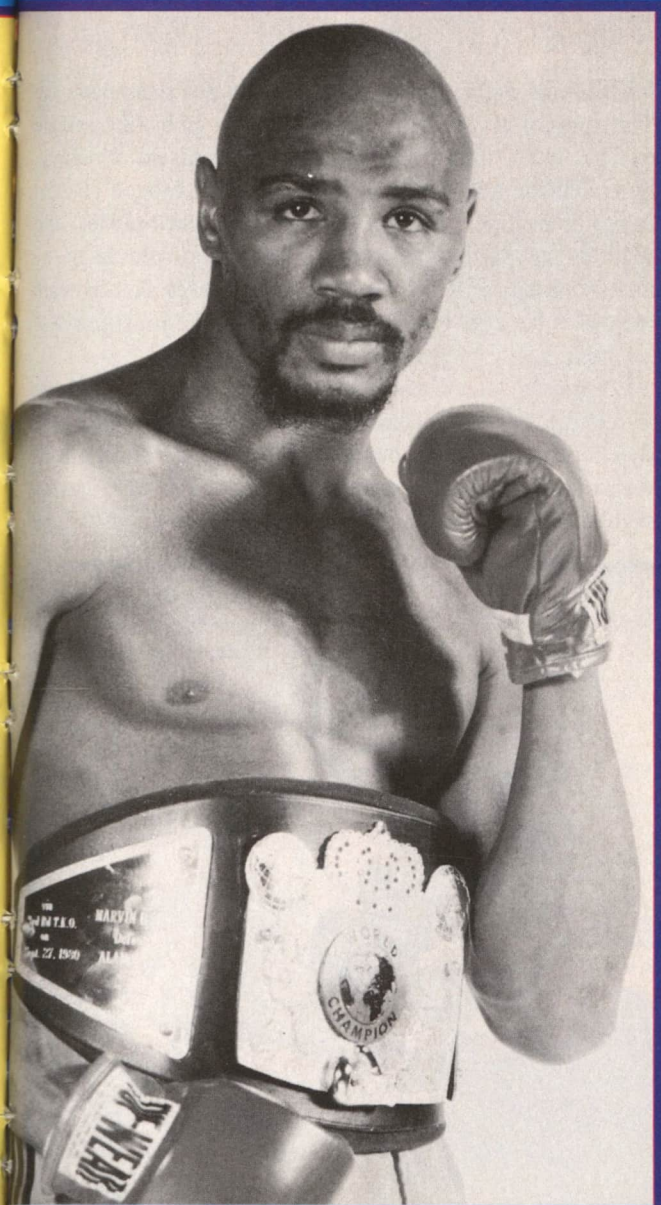
Greb's strengths: There are no films of Greb fights, but he was known as a rough, strong, extremely slippery, whirlwind fighter, who threw punches from all angles, had remarkable stamina and guts, and had one of the best-ever chins. Look who he beat: Gene Tunney, Tommy Loughran, and Mickey Walker, to mention three. Even Jack Dempsey couldn't handle him in sparring. Greb bettered 14 world champions from middleweight to heavyweight, suffered only eight losses in 305 fights, and five of those came after losing the sight in one eye. He went 188 fights without defeat from 1916-'23 (when, two years past his prime, he lost a decision to Tunney). Greb won the world middleweight title in his 245th bout and held it for 2½ years before losing it on a split decision in bout 302.

Greb's weaknesses: With only 51 stoppages on his record, he was not a huge puncher (yet he knocked out several good heavyweights). He was a drinking man who seldom trained hard, but fought so often—46 fights comprising 445 rounds in 1919 alone—that gym work was superfluous. He was also an extremely dirty fighter, making liberal use of thumbs, head, and elbows, and may have faced disqualification in Hagler's era.



Greb takes the middleweight title from Flowers

MARVELOUS MARVIN HAGLER

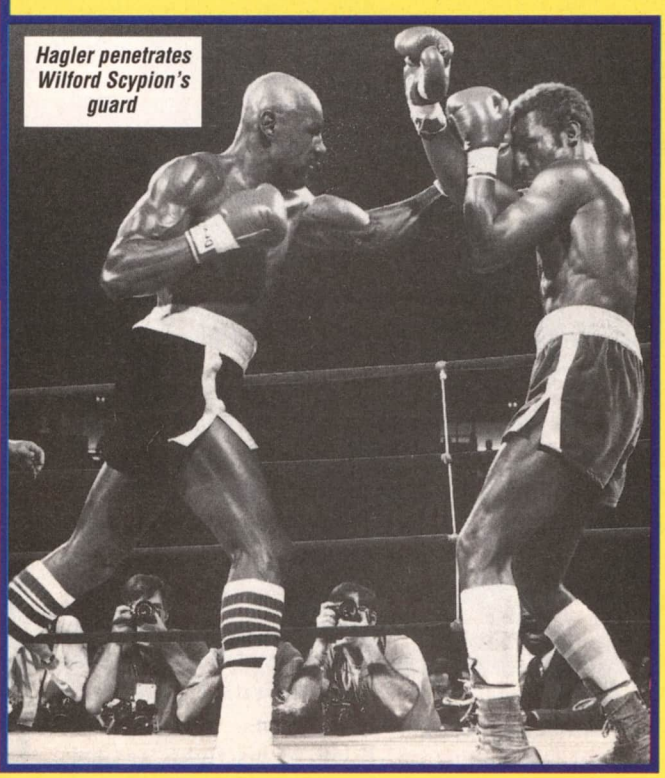


Hagler's strengths: He could box beautifully behind his right jab, then switch to orthodox, slipping, parrying, and countering. He could also brawl with the best. He was a heavy puncher with both hands (52 knockouts in 67 fights), seemed impervious to punishment, and was always in splendid shape. Hagler also had to wait for his title shot, finally getting a crack at Vito Antuofermo in his 50th pro bout, only to be ripped off when it was ruled a draw. He eventually won the title by stopping Alan Minter in September 1980. Marvelous Marvin successfully defended 12 times before losing a questionable split decision to Leonard when almost 33, following 13 months of inactivity (and after 37 fights without a defeat). Two of his three losses and both of his draws were controversial.

Hagler's weaknesses: He was not a particularly big middleweight (regularly weighing a few pounds under 160) and sometimes struggled with pressure fighting from strong men—Willie Monroe (in their first bout), Antuofermo, Mustafa Hamsho, Juan Roldan—which is perhaps why, unlike Greb, he never tried his luck in heavier divisions. The far smaller Roberto Duran held him to a close decision, Thomas Hearns cut him, and Ray Leonard frustrated him with his speed.

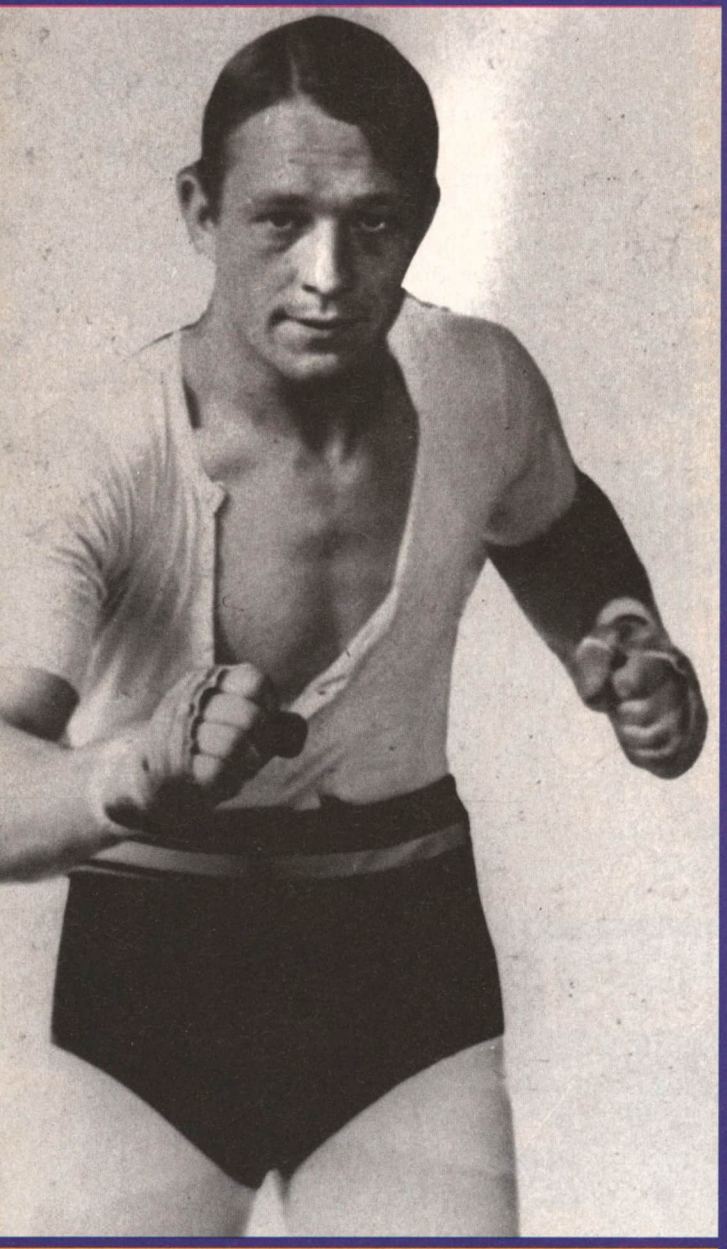
Style matchup: The 5'8" Greb was an extremely unorthodox fighter who was most effective at short-range, throwing a non-stop barrage of punches and roughing up the opposition. The 5'9" Hagler boxed behind his jab, switch-hitting to confuse his opponents, but was also adept at close quarters.

Outcome: Greb throws hooks from all angles. Hagler tries to hold him off with his right jab, but Greb closes the gap, giving no room to punch. Hagler, the heavier hitter, switches to orthodox and then resorts to slugging, but Greb is stronger and has a higher work rate. He is continually warned for fouls and has two points deducted, but wins a disputed split decision anyway. A bitter Hagler leaves with one eye closed and the other cut.



Hagler penetrates Wilford Scypion's guard

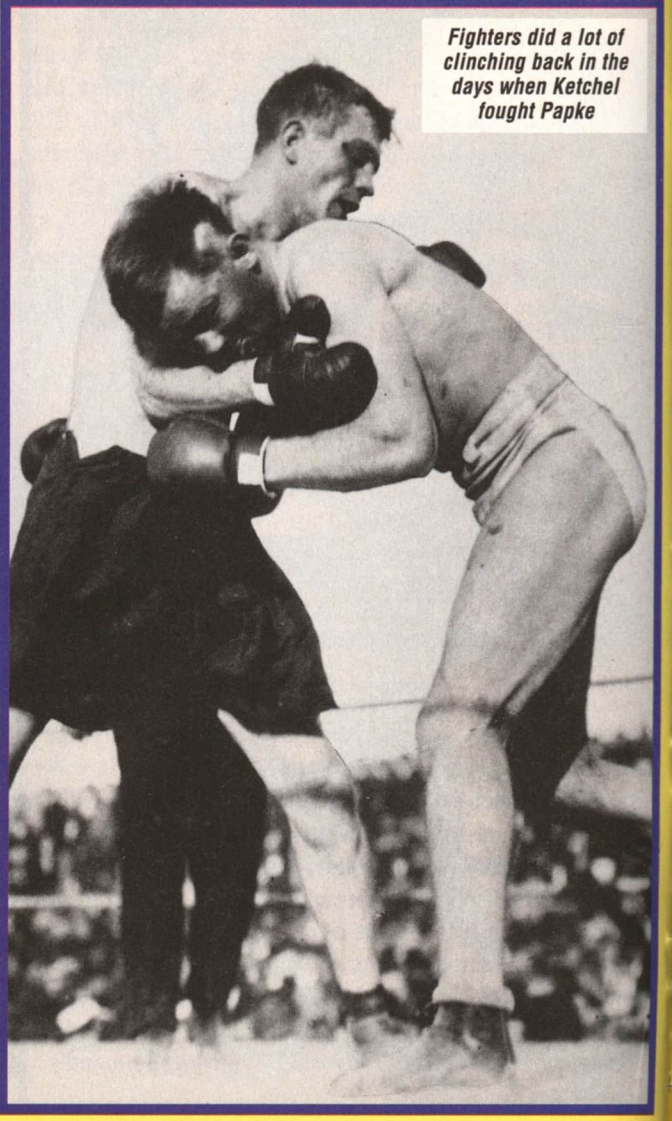
STANLEY KETCHEL



Ketchel's strengths: Fondly rated by RING founder Nat Fleischer as the best-ever middleweight, Ketchel's greatest asset was his power in both fists—49 knockouts in 52 wins (64 bouts). He was also extremely strong for a middleweight, wearing men down by breaking them in the clinches. He had a good chin and great stamina (winning one fight on a 32nd-round knockout and going 17 rounds or more 10 times). He knocked out four middleweight champions and light heavyweight champion Jack O'Brien, lasted the distance with a peak Sam Langford, and even dropped Jack Johnson.

Ketchel's weaknesses: Films of his fights against Johnson and Billy Papke suggest he did not rise above the limitations of his era—upright stance, slow on his feet, single punches rather than combinations, and incessant clinching. Both Johnson and Papke knocked him out, though he beat Papke three times. Ketchel was a self-taught brawler who could be outboxed, as O'Brien, among others, proved in the first six rounds of their first fight. Ketchel was shot to death soon after his 24th birthday and never fulfilled his immense potential.

Graziano's strengths: An aggressive, all-action brawler with impressive power, particularly with his right (scoring 52 knockouts in 67 wins), he loved a good tear-up. His three wars with Tony Zale were among the most exciting in boxing history. Among those he stopped were the rock-chinned Zale,



Fighters did a lot of clinching back in the days when Ketchel fought Papke

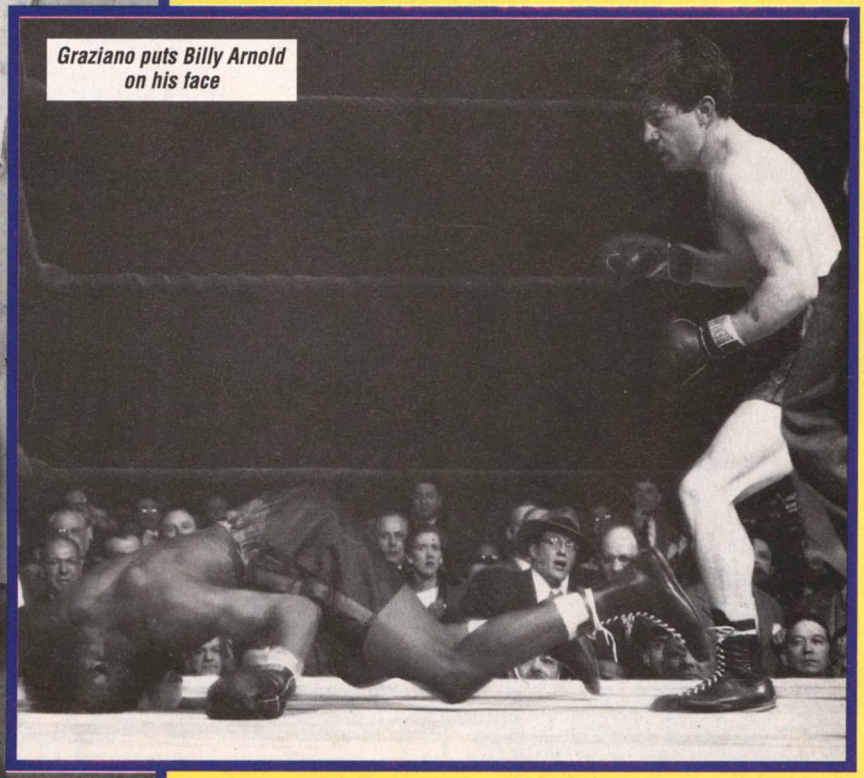
vs. ROCKY GRAZIANO

tough contenders such as Charlie Fusari and Tony Janiro, and welterweight champion Freddie Cochrane (twice). He went unbeaten in 21 straight before losing to Ray Robinson at the age of 33, in Graziano's second to last fight.

Graziano's weaknesses: He was really a junior middleweight, easy to hit, with crude skills and not always in peak shape. A crowd-pleaser, he just happened to be in the right place at the right time, and was fortunate to avoid the likes of Jake LaMotta, Marcel Cerdan, Charley Burley, and Holman Williams. Despite his reputation for durability, Graziano lost two out of three on knockouts against an aging Zale and was also knocked out by Robinson. His patchy record shows 10 losses and six draws in 83 fights.

Style matchup: The 5'7", 154-pound Graziano was a pure slugger who attacked from the opening bell, putting great commitment behind his punches. The 5'9," 158-pound Ketchel worked at a slower pace, clinching often and landing heavy single head and bodypunches.

Outcome: Ketchel is astonished by the intensity of Graziano's attack. In round two, a right cross drops Ketchel for a short count, and he is forced to cling for safety. Ketchel is, however, the stronger man and the heavier puncher, and by the fifth round he starts to wear down Graziano's resistance. Ketchel puts him down with a left hook in the sixth and knocks him out with a right in round seven.



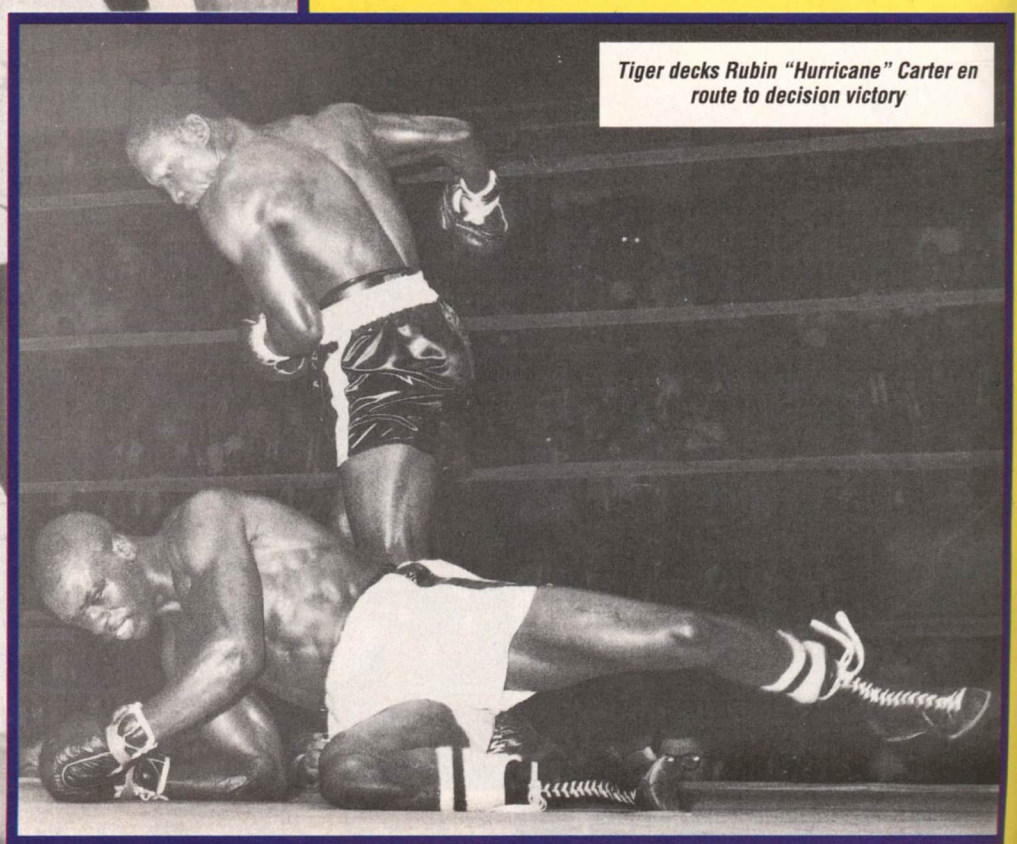
Graziano puts Billy Arnold on his face

DICK TIGER VS

Tiger's strengths: One of the strongest-ever middleweights, he could wear down bigger men with his two-fisted style and was also a canny counterpuncher. Few could survive trading punches with Tiger. "I wouldn't even trade stamps with him," said Joey Giardello. The tough, brawling Rubin Carter added: "He sure kicked the hell out of me." Tiger was also extremely tough and resilient, with a great chin. After two stints as middleweight champion (winning his first title at almost 34), he gave away eight pounds to beat Jose Torres for the light heavyweight title, defending it twice before losing it to Bob Foster when nearly 39 years old. Slick boxers he beat included Giardello (twice), Torres (twice), and Nino Benvenuti, while he outpunched the brawling Carter and twice outboxed and outpunched the aggressive Gene Fullmer.

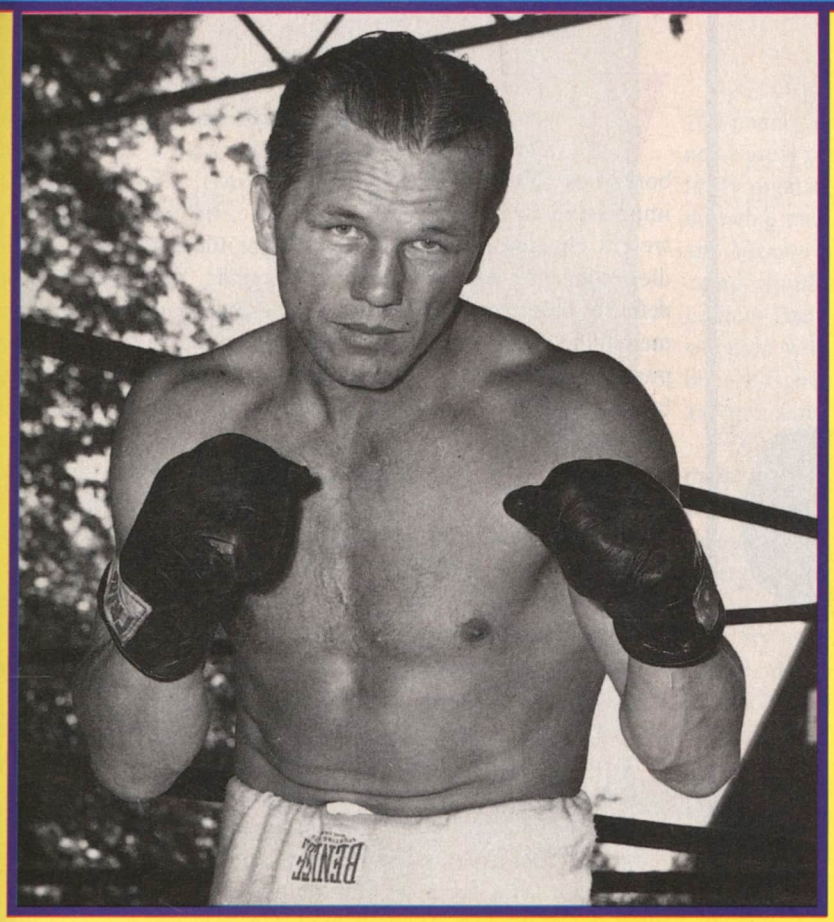
Tiger's weaknesses: He had trouble with the best quick, slick boxers who could keep their distance. Giardello soundly outboxed him in their third fight, and so did Emile Griffith. Tiger never maintained a consistent winning record (although several of the 17 losses and three draws on his 81 fights record were disputed). And while he was certainly heavy-handed, he was not a one-punch knockout artist.

Zale's strengths: Known as "The Man Of Steel" and said to be immune to punishment, Zale was a hardy boxer-puncher with a great right cross and one of the best body attacks in the



Tiger decks Rubin "Hurricane" Carter en route to decision victory

TONY ZALE



game. Forty-five of his 68 wins came via knockout. His first reign as undisputed world champion lasted five years, eight months, and he regained the title at age 35 in his rubber match with Graziano. At his peak he had a run of 21 fights when the only man to beat him was Billy Conn. He beat four world middleweight champions.

Zale's weaknesses: Even at or near his peak, quick movers at an elite level could outbox him. And despite his toughness, he could also be overpowered, as evidenced by his five knockout losses. The smaller Graziano stopped him in six rounds in their second bout, and a year later Marcel Cerdan outpunched and out-muscled him. Zale's long championship reign was less impressive than it sounds—four years lost to World War II—and, therefore, he tallied only one successful defense.

Style matchup: The 5'10" Zale had an orthodox style, featuring a stiff jab and a big right cross, and he liked to step in to land his body bombs. The 5'7" Tiger preferred fighting at close quarters, swamping opponents with short punches, particularly his left hook.

Outcome: Zale shades the early rounds with his precision attack, landing sharp jabs and hard, accurately placed rights to the head and body. But as the fight progresses, Tiger soaks up the punishment and closes the gap, driving Zale into the ropes. It becomes an intense war of attrition, with Zale the sharper boxer and puncher, but Tiger busier and stronger. Tiger wins a close, unanimous decision.

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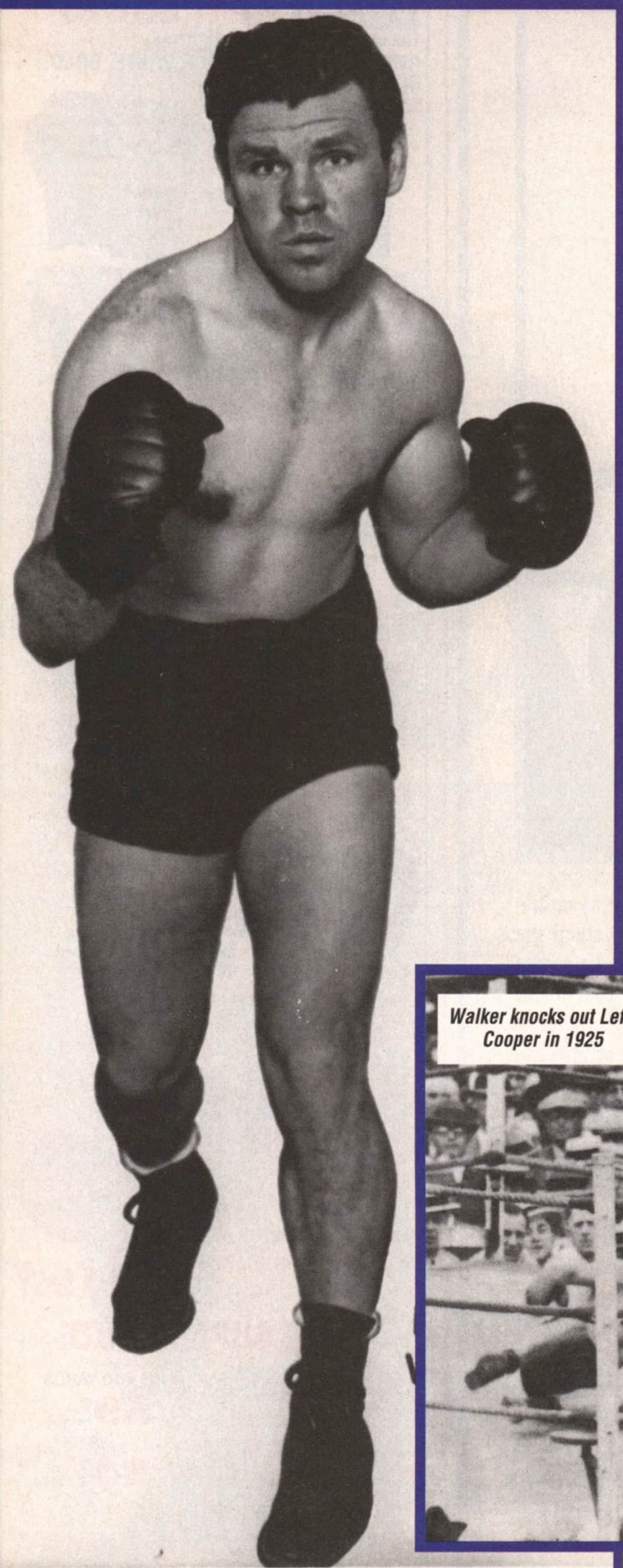
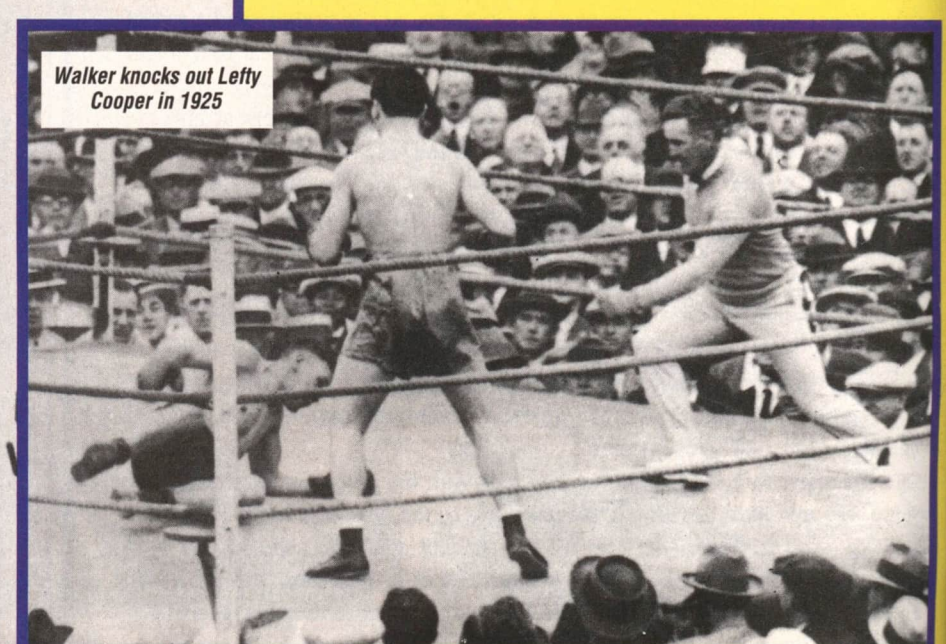
MICKEY WALKER



Walker's strengths: Watch films of Walker fights and you may think you're seeing a modern boxer. He was a swarming, all-action fighter with a serious dig in both fists (60 knockouts out of 93 wins), a solid chin, and impressive strength and courage. After 3½ years as welterweight champion, he decisioned Tiger Flowers for the middleweight title, weighing only 154 pounds. Walker made four defenses before proving his strength against some of the best big men in the world. He lost split decisions in two bids for the 175-pound title, but beat three light heavyweight champions, and later gave away 30 pounds to hold future heavyweight champion Jack Sharkey to a draw.

Walker's weaknesses: He was a short (5'7"), squat middleweight, occasionally outboxed by taller, quicker boxers. He was the beneficiary of a blatant robbery against slick southpaw Flowers and was later outpointed by Tommy Loughran. Earlier, Walker was outbrawled by Harry Greb, who was years past his peak. Despite wins over lesser heavyweight contenders, the 188-pound Max Schmeling put matters into perspective by flattening Walker in eight rounds.

LaMotta's strengths: "The Bronx Bull" is widely credited as having the best chin in boxing history, but he was certainly no punching bag. He was a strong, aggressive but clever fighter, good at slipping and rolling away from punches. He finally got a world title shot in his 89th fight when he stopped Marcel Cerdan. LaMotta defended the title twice before losing it to old foe Ray Robinson in his 96th fight, when he had severe weight troubles. He beat several outstanding men, including Robinson and Holman Williams.



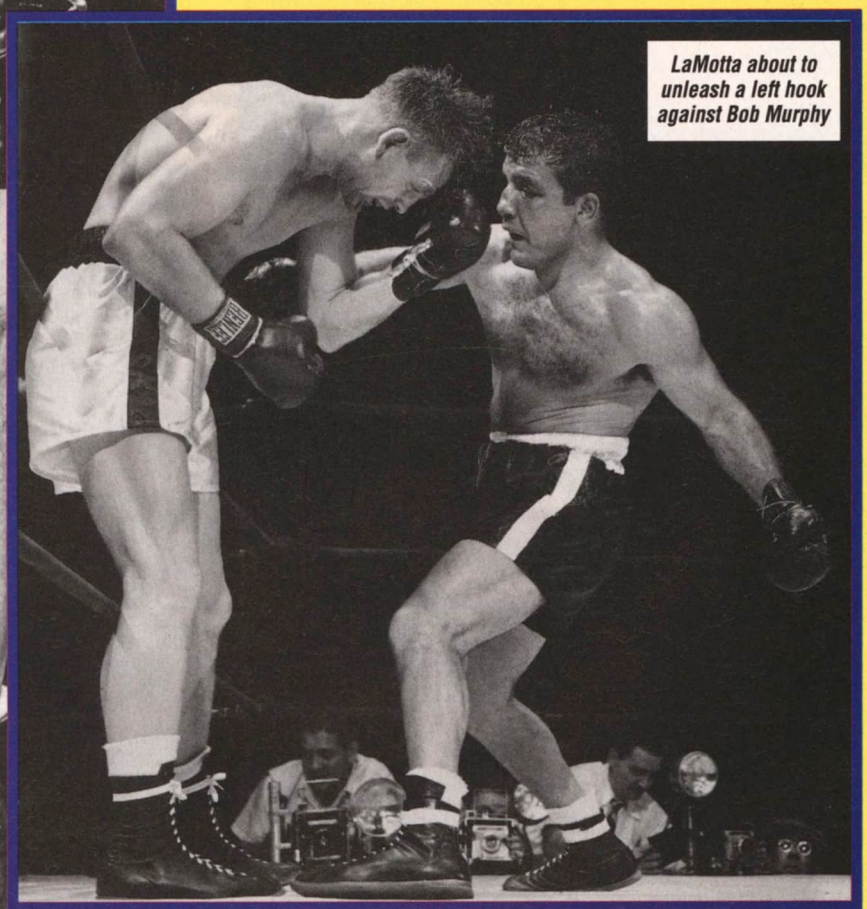
Walker knocks out Lefty Cooper in 1925

vs. JAKE LaMOTTA

LaMotta's weaknesses: The 5'8" LaMotta struggled at the 160-pound limit, mainly because of his eating habits. He was not a great puncher (only 30 knockouts in 106 bouts) and was fairly regularly outboxed (19 losses, four draws). He admitted throwing one fight (vs. Billy Fox) in order to get his title shot and became world champion with the help of Cerdan's dislocated shoulder. LaMotta was outboxed for 14 rounds by Laurent Dauthuille in his second defense, before salvaging the situation with a 15th-round kayo. LaMotta is best known for his six-fight series with Robinson, but he lost five of them, and in his one win he had a 16-pound weight advantage.

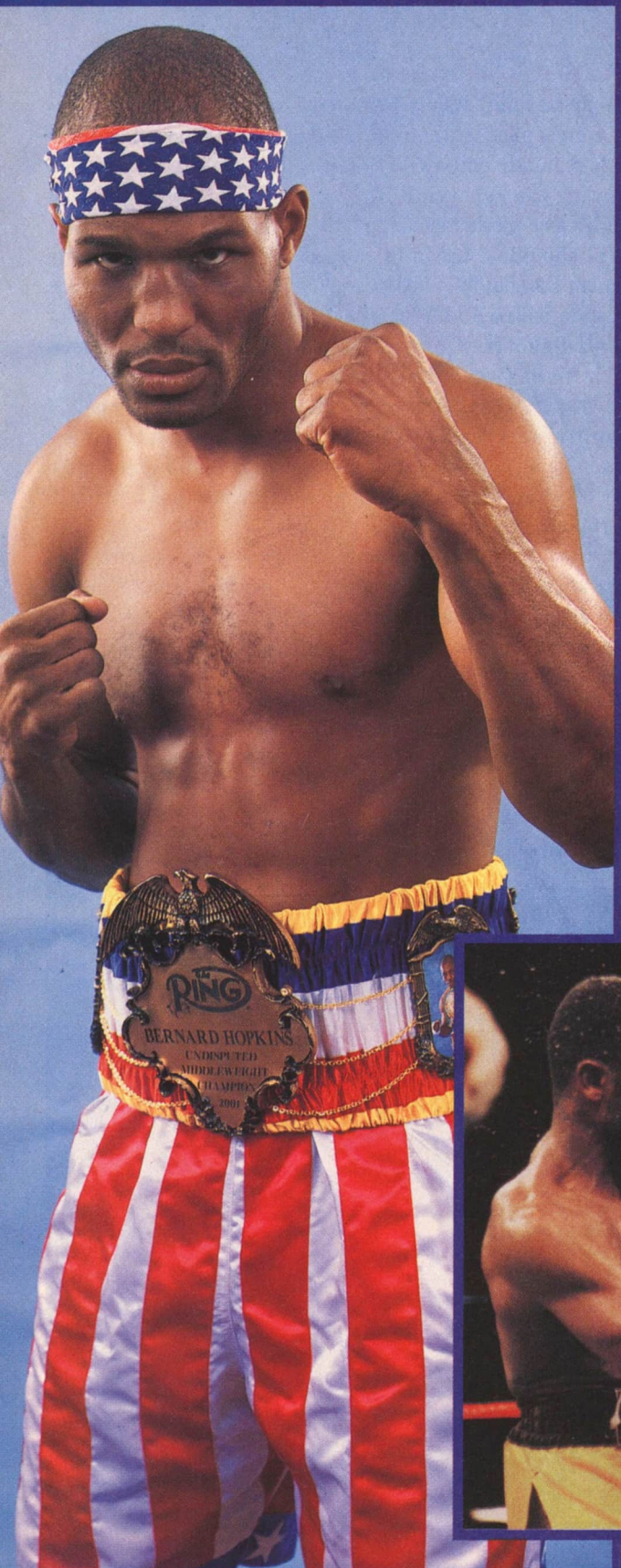
Style matchup: Both men were attacking fighters who did their best work up close. Walker was not easy to hit, with his crouching style and constant movement. LaMotta would often ease off to draw the other man in, and then attack in a flurry of short punches.

Outcome: It is clear these men are evenly matched and their styles and strength are well-harmonized. For 15 rounds they exchange hooks, with no quarter given and no knockdowns. Walker, the heavier puncher, wins a unanimous decision.



LaMotta about to unleash a left hook against Bob Murphy

BERNARD HOPKINS



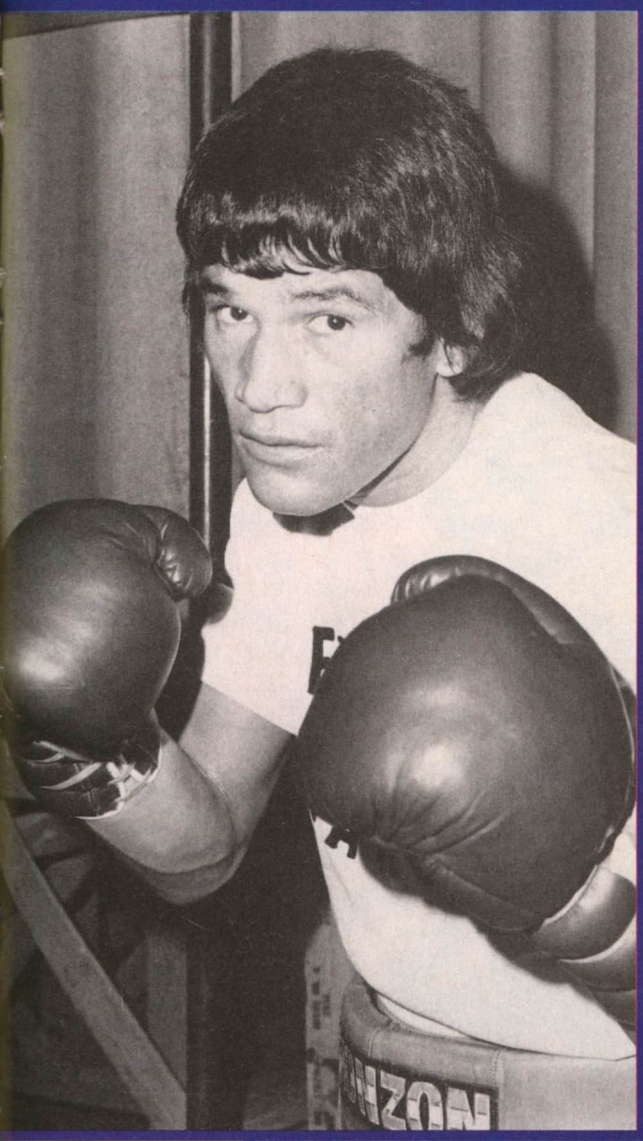
Hopkins' strengths: A consummate boxer-puncher, equally adept at long range and on the inside, with quick feet, great strength, excellent combination punching, and a reliable chin. He can fight dirty and spoil when he feels like it, hits hard (31 knockouts in 42 wins), and is hard to tag. Aside from a light heavyweight points loss in his first bout, his only defeat in 46 outings came on points against the brilliant Roy Jones more than 10 years ago. "The Executioner" stopped the 40-0 Felix Trinidad to become the first undisputed middleweight champion since Marvin Hagler and has defended his various 160-pound titles a record 16 times, overcoming skill (Keith Holmes, John David Jackson, Robert Allen) and serious power (Trinidad, Antwun Echols).

Hopkins' weaknesses: Until he unified the world title, Hopkins was not rated among the pound-for-pound elite. He was outboxed by Jones in his first title bid, scraped a draw against pressure fighter Segundo Mercado in his second (stopping Mercado in the return), and was troubled by Allen's speed in their first, no-contest fight (stopping Allen in the return). He is often his own worst enemy, setting impossible negotiating conditions that keep him out of big fights. Despite standing 6'1", he is not a big middleweight, weighing as light as 156 pounds in some title bouts.

Monzon's strengths: He was a tall (6'), strong middleweight who threw long, hard, accurate punches with both hands (59 knockouts in 87 wins). He had a tight defense and was an expert at controlling the pace and rhythm of a fight. He also had a sound chin. Monzon's style seldom looked pretty,

Hopkins on the attack against Antwun Echols

VS. CARLOS MONZON

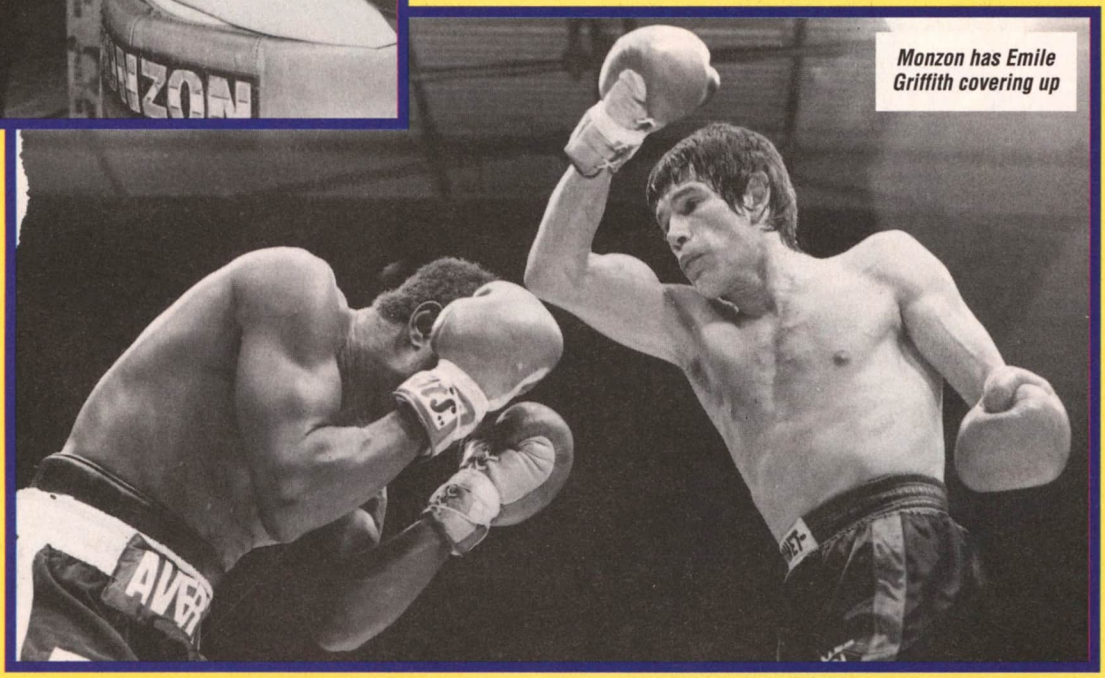


but it was invariably effective. He was world champion for over six years, defending the title 14 times against the division's elite, including world champions Nino Benvenuti, Emile Griffith, Jose Napoles, and Rodrigo Valdes, as well outstanding contender Bennie Briscoe. He suffered only three defeats in 100 fights.

Monzon's weaknesses: Speed and skill sometimes troubled him. Emile Griffith, a 35-year-old ex-welterweight, held him to a disputed decision. The robust Valdes twice lost close decisions, dropping him in their second fight. Monzon's record was inflated by what could euphemistically be called Argentinean decisions (among the worst was the 1967 draw against Briscoe, one of nine draws on Monzon's log). As a pack-a-day smoker and outside-of-the-ring wild man, it is hard to believe that he could have matched the conditioning and therefore work rate of a fitness fanatic like Hopkins.

Style matchup: Monzon worked best from long range, landing mainly straight punches while moving forward behind a stiff jab and occasionally throwing uppercuts. Hopkins moves around the ring more and mixes it up at all ranges, sometimes throwing hard single punches and at other times rapid-fire combinations.

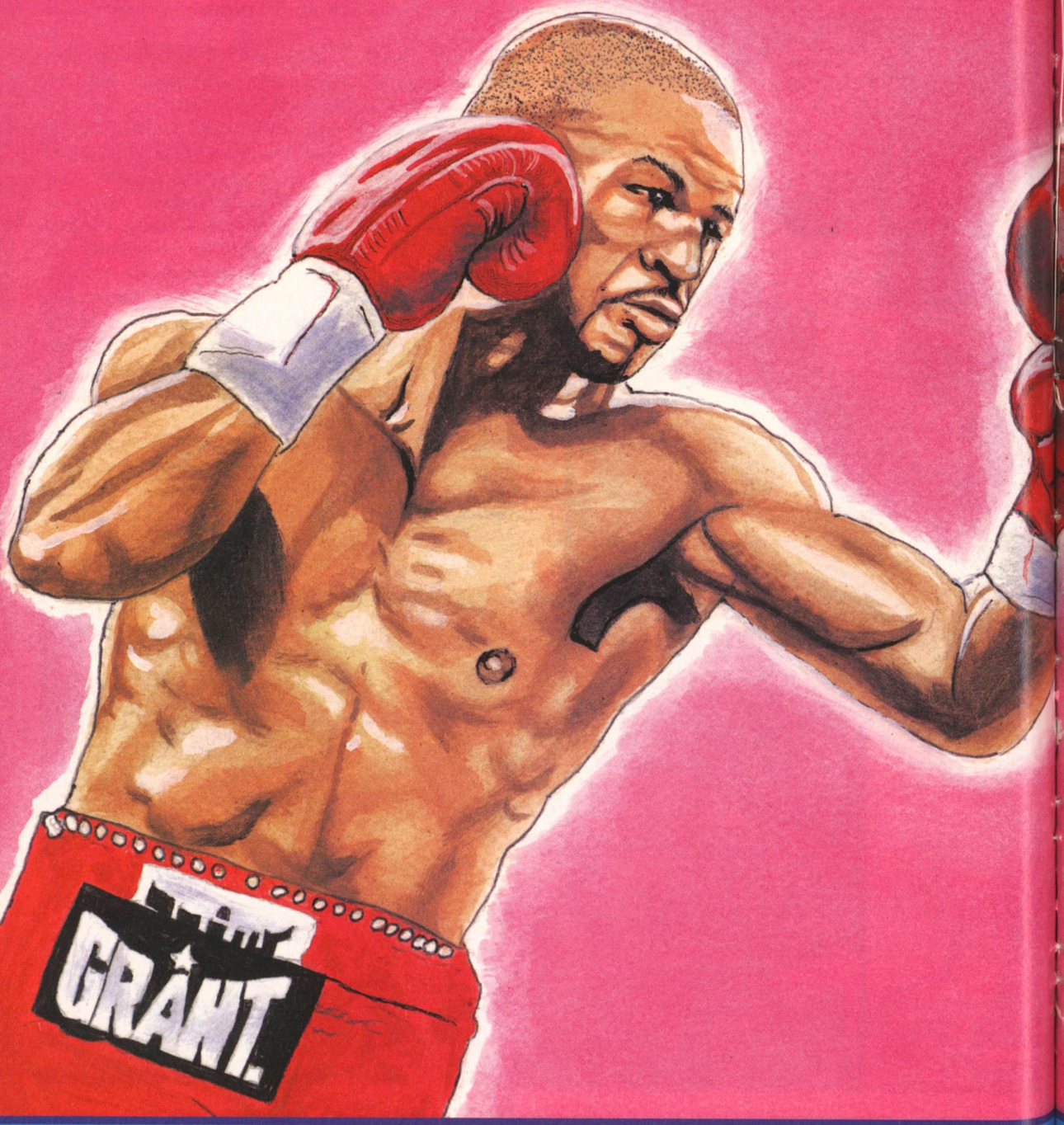
Outcome: This is a nip and tuck fight. Monzon has a slight edge in power, but the quicker Hopkins is busier. Both men take short counts and Hopkins has a point deducted for a low blow, which proves to be decisive. Monzon scrapes home on a split decision with ringsiders evenly divided as to who deserved it.

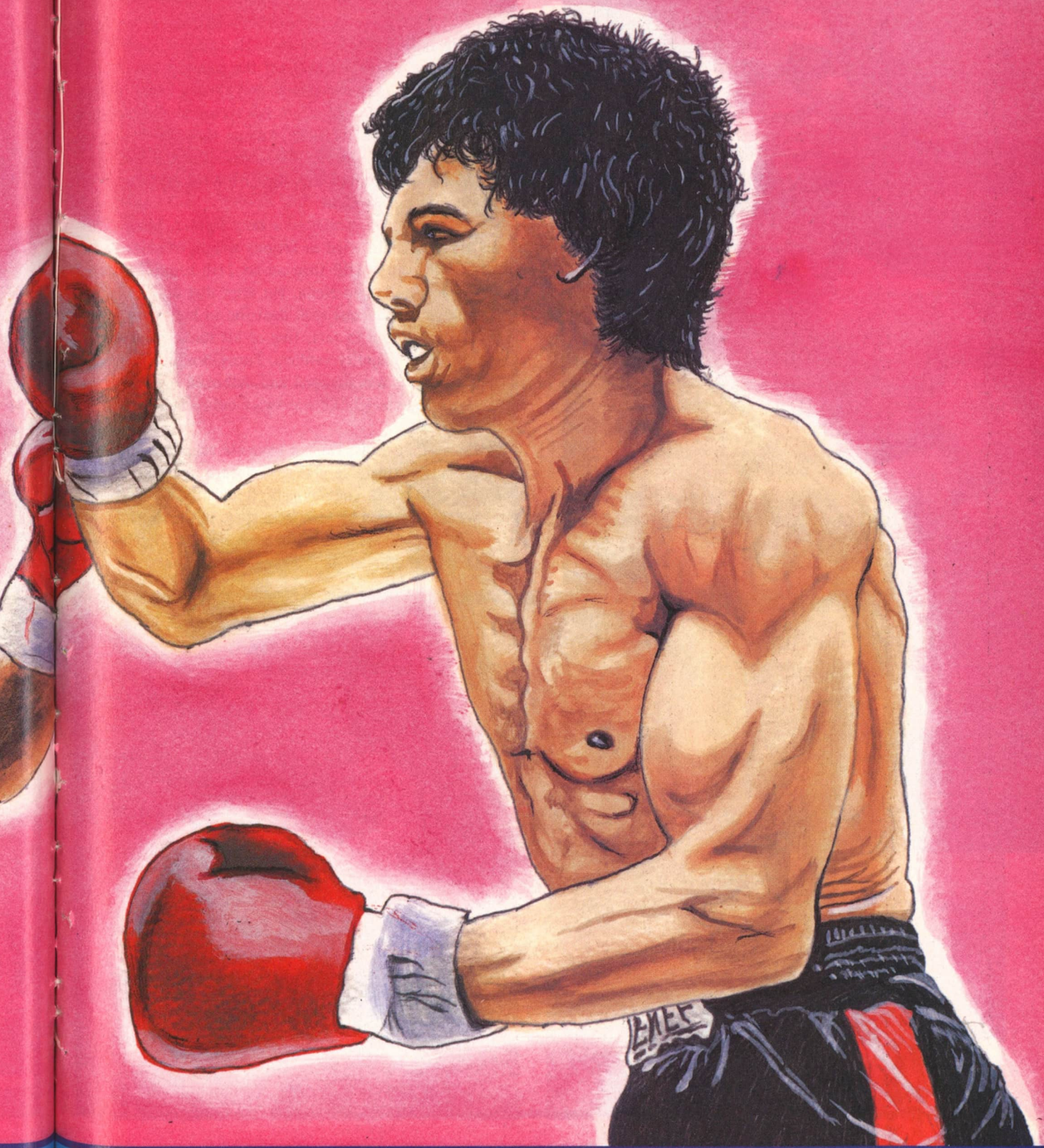


Monzon has Emile Griffith covering up

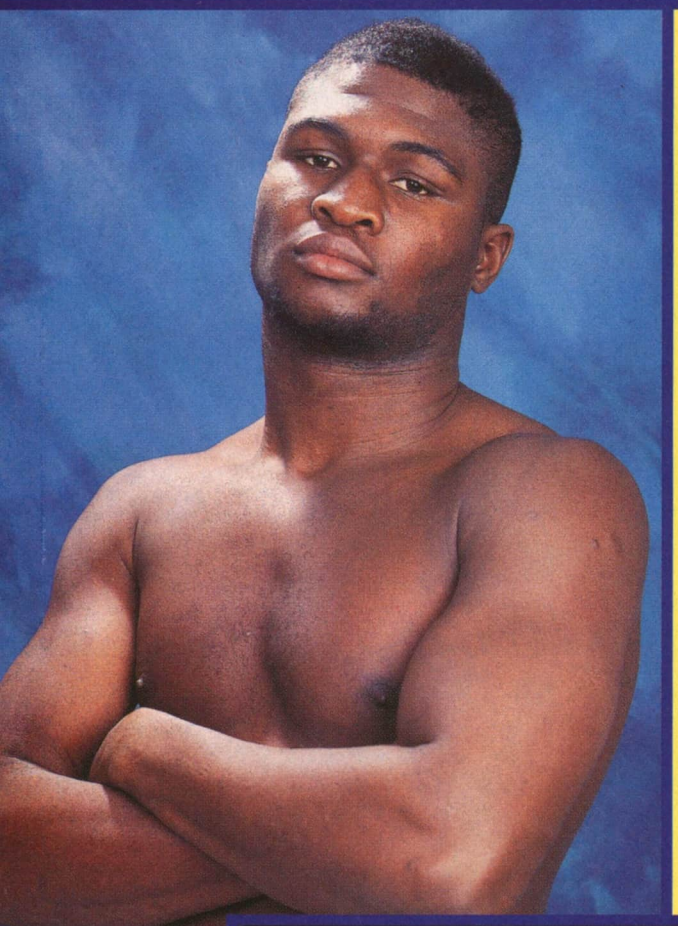
BERNARD HOPKINS vs. CARLOS MONZON

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER





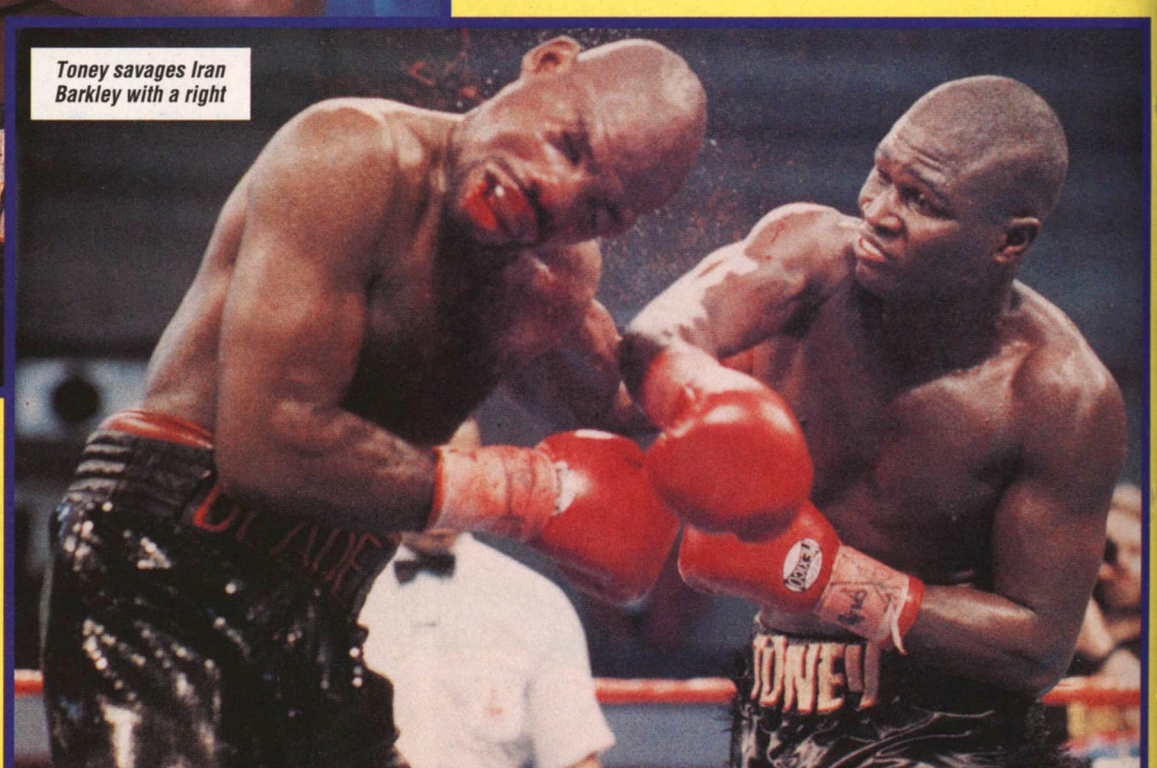
JAMES TONEY VS



Toney's strengths: He combines serious power with cute skills and a sturdy chin. He can mix it up on the inside, fight effectively off the ropes, jab and cross from the outside, or counterpunch, and has the knack of slipping punches with minimal effort. His record at middleweight was an exemplary 32-0-2 (22). Among those he beat were titleholders Michael Nunn, Mike McCallum, and Reggie Johnson. He went on to win the IBF title at super middleweight and cruiserweight.

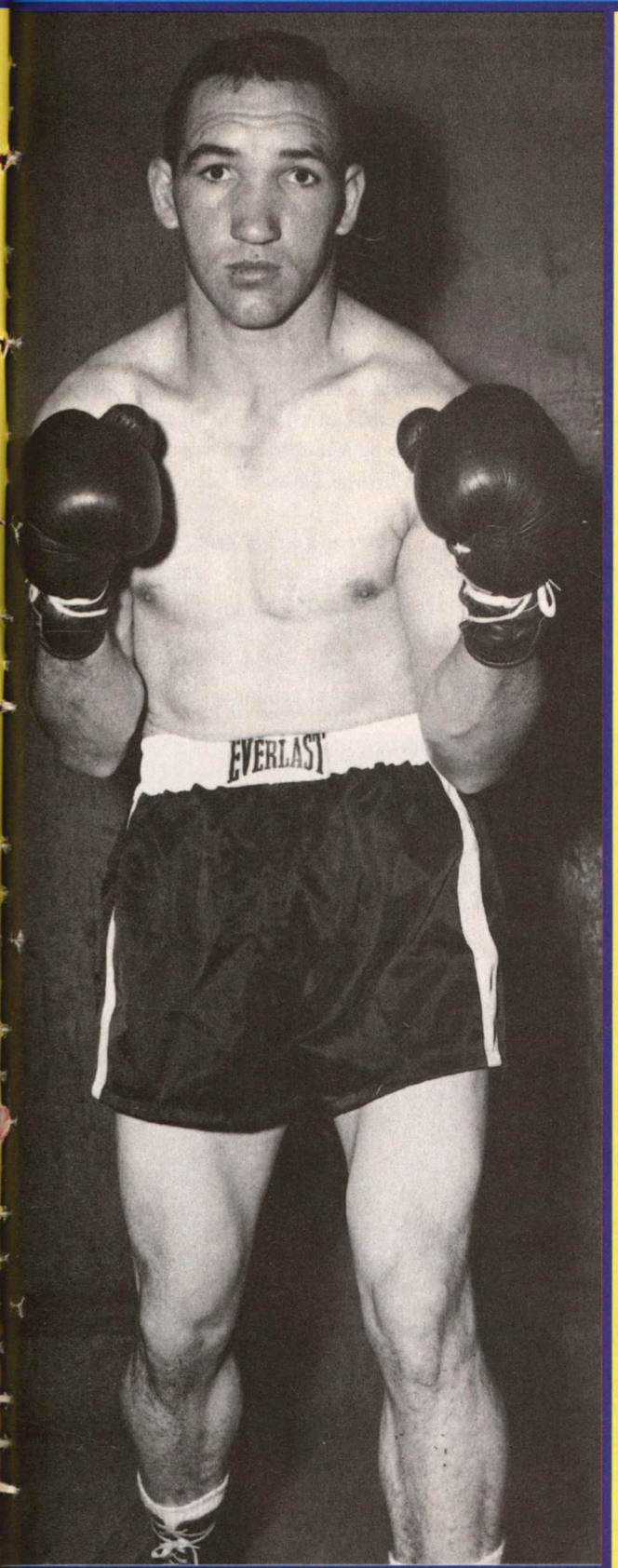
Toney's weaknesses: Often a lazy fighter, his undisciplined lifestyle contributed to serious weight troubles at 160 pounds. He won the IBF title on an 11th-round knockout against a weight-drained Nunn, but after that his record was inflated by an outrageous split decision in his favor against Dave Tiberi in 1992. In fact, five of his middleweight wins came via split or majority verdicts. Toney reached his peak at super middle, but was dropped and outboxed by Roy Jones, and at light heavyweight he was twice outworked by Montell Griffin.

Fullmer's strengths: He had immense stamina, impressive strength, and considerable ability to absorb punishment. This enabled him to attack continuously, frequently wearing down better boxers. This can be seen from some of the names on his record. He had one spell as undisputed world champion (outpointing Ray Robinson in 1957). Two years later he over-



Toney savages Iran Barkley with a right

GENE FULLMER

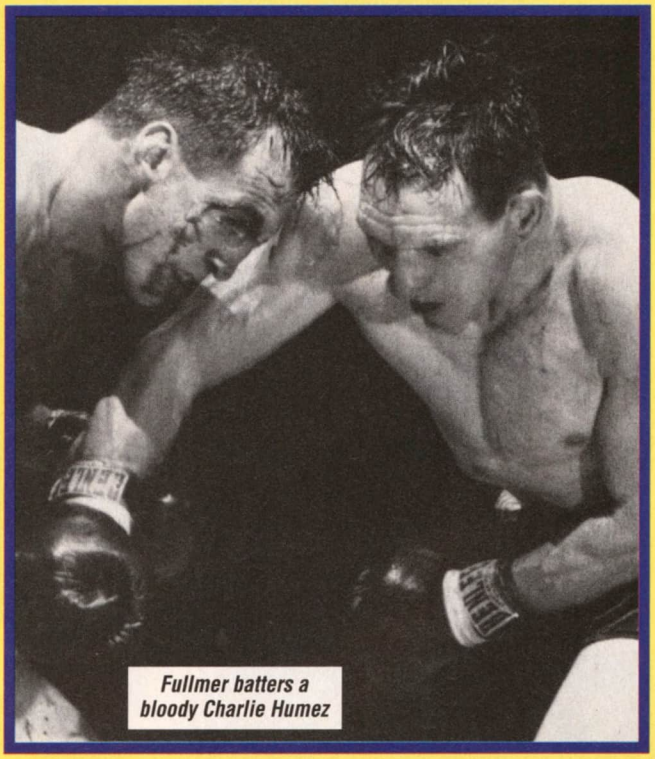


whelmed Carmen Basilio in 14 rounds to claim the NBA version, which he defended seven times, including another win and a draw against Robinson, another stoppage over Basilio, a knockout against welterweight champion Benny Paret, and a draw against Joey Giardello.

Fullmer's weaknesses: He was not a great defensive boxer, nor was he a huge hitter. Despite his reputation for durability, he was knocked cold by a 36-year-old Robinson and stopped by the 34-year-old Dick Tiger. Like Toney, his record was inflated by questionable decisions. He was considered fortunate to come out even in each of his three draws (Giardello in particular, but also Tiger and the 39-year-old Robinson) and some disputed his split decision win over Florentino Fernandez in '61.

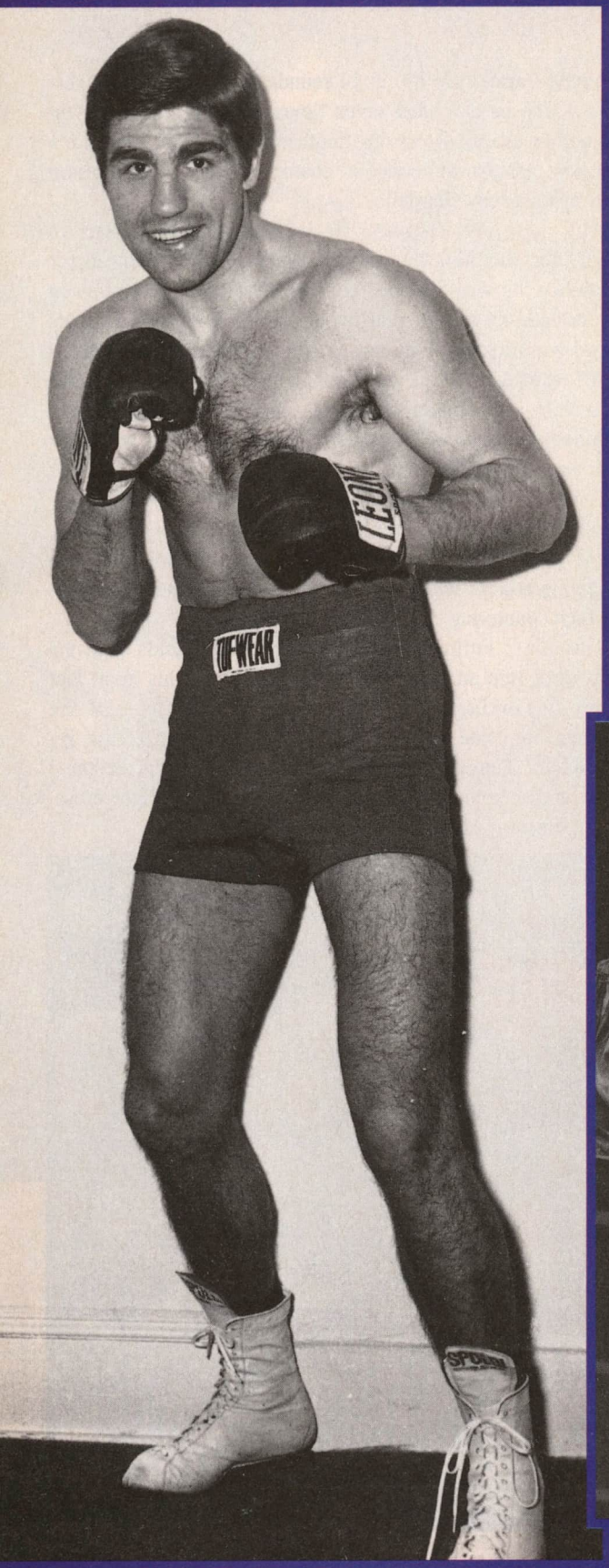
Style matchup: The 5'8" Fullmer was a go-for-broke brawler who used his strength to drive opponents backward. The 5'10" Toney boxes best from middle and close range, deflecting attacks with slight movements of his head or body, and then countering.

Outcome: Fullmer edges the first three rounds with his high work rate and bull-like efforts to corner his man. But Toney is working well off the ropes, slipping most of the punches that come his way, and landing hurtful uppercuts. By the fourth, Toney's straighter, harder punches make their mark, and in round six he drops Fullmer with a right cross, before finishing him with a left hook in round seven.



Fullmer batters a bloody Charlie Humez

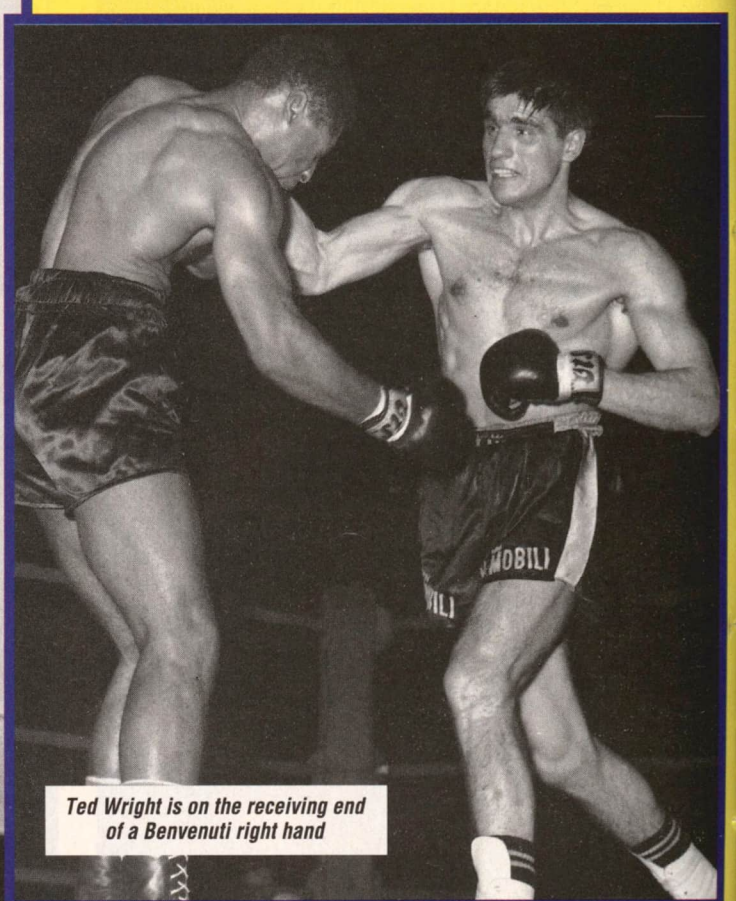
NINO BENVENUTI



Benvenuti's strengths: In 1960 it was Italy's Benvenuti, and not America's Cassius Clay, who won the Val Barker cup as the best boxer in the Olympics. He had an excellent jab, good movement, and slick defensive skills. He went 65-0 before losing in defense of the junior middleweight title. A year later, he outpointed Emile Griffith for the middleweight title, lost it to him on a majority decision, and then regained it in 1968, defending it four times before going down and out in 12 rounds to Carlos Monzon at the age of 32. Six of his seven losses came after his 30th birthday.

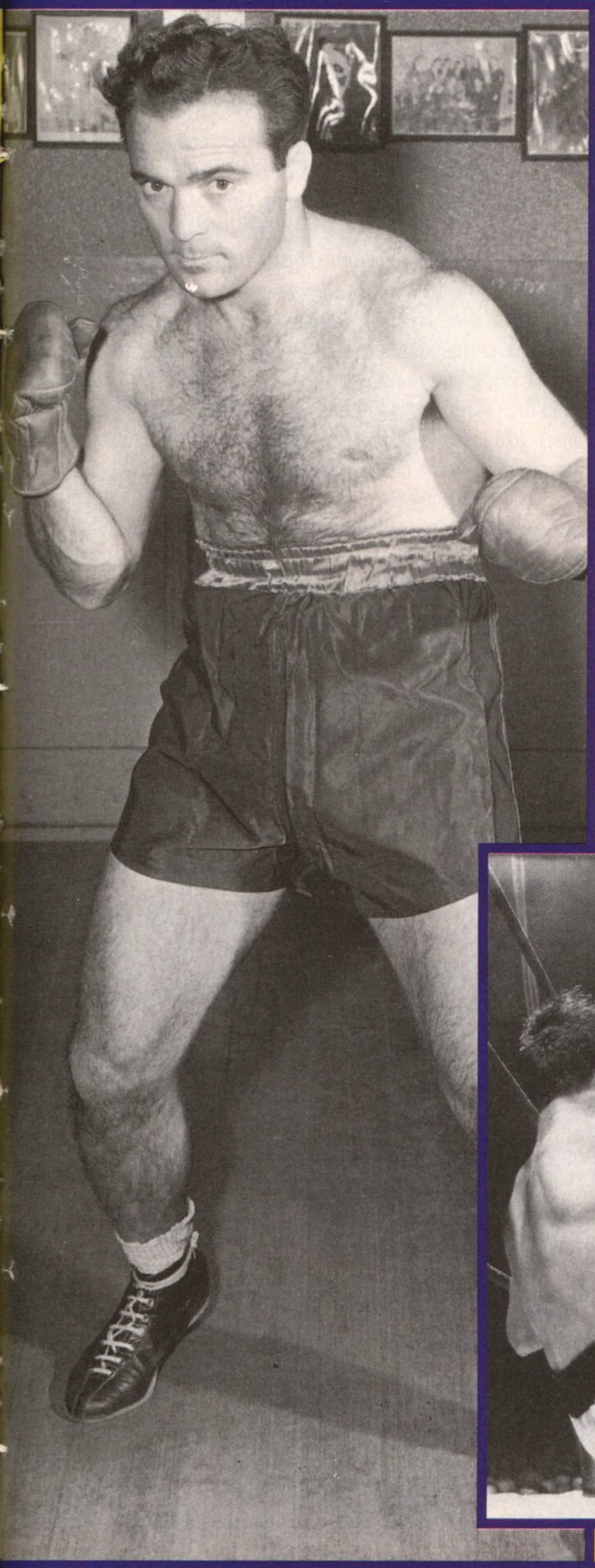
Benvenuti's weaknesses: He was not a huge puncher (35 stoppages in 90 fights) and did not have the most durable chin (knocked out by Tom Bethea in a non-title fight when he was champion, and then twice by Monzon). His inconsistent commitment to training and his love of the sweet life contributed to his decline.

Cerdan's strengths: He was a heavy-handed boxer-puncher, whose strength, work rate, power, and chin made him one of the greats of the 1940s. His first 75 fights were at welterweight, where he won the European title, and lost only twice (both on disqualification). After World War II, he moved up to middleweight and went 33-2, with one of those losses coming on a disputed decision



Ted Wright is on the receiving end of a Benvenuti right hand

VS. MARCEL CERDAN

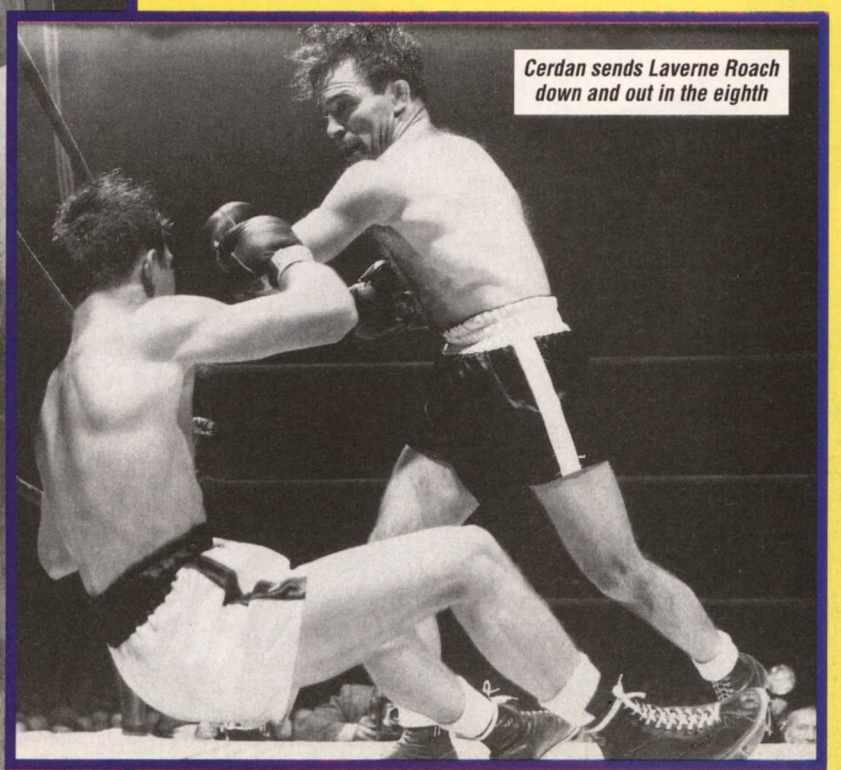


(promptly reversed) and the other a 10-round stoppage against Jake LaMotta in '49 after Cerdan dislocated his shoulder in the first round. Elite middleweights he beat included Georgie Abrams and Holman Williams, before finally getting a world title shot at the age of 32, in his 107th fight. He overpowered Tony Zale in 12 rounds, giving him a severe beating. Cerdan died in a plane crash at age 33, while flying to America for a return with LaMotta.

Cerdan's weaknesses: His aggressive style was fairly straightforward and he did not have much in the way of lateral movement or defensive finesse. His first 94 fights were all fought in Europe and Africa, and he was probably past his best by the time he made his American debut. He was therefore never tested against many of the best middleweights of his era, but LaMotta didn't seem to have much trouble with him (although Cerdan claimed that was entirely due to his shoulder injury).

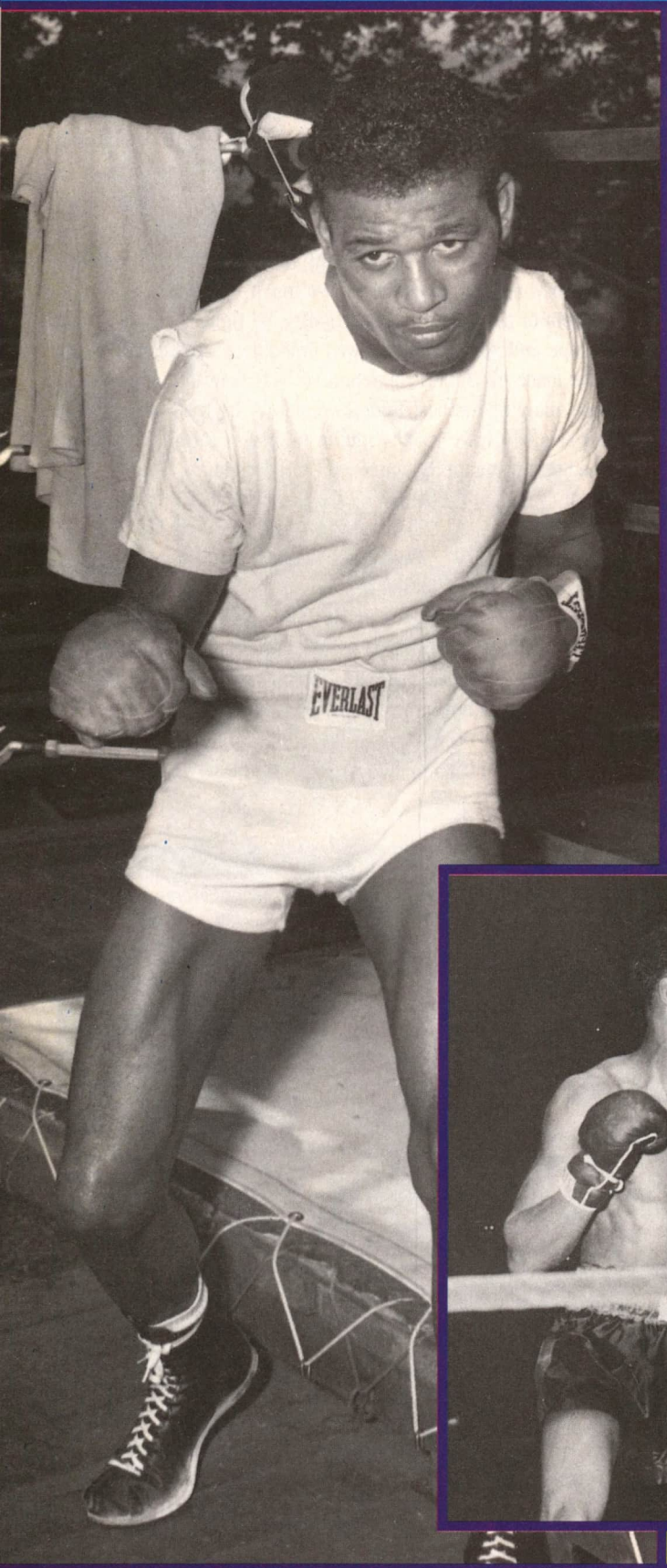
Style matchup: The 5'8½" Cerdan was an attacking boxer who barreled forward behind a high guard, throwing heavy hooks and crosses. The 5'11" Benvenuti boxed at range behind his jab, looking for spots to shoot home his right.

Outcome: Benvenuti dominates the first seven rounds with his speed and skill, landing snappy combinations and then moving out of trouble. But in the second half, Cerdan's advantages in strength and power slowly begin to drain the Italian's energy. In round 13, Cerdan pins him on the ropes, dropping him with a barrage of punches. Benvenuti rises, but Cerdan puts him down and out with a heavy right cross.



Cerdan sends Laverne Roach down and out in the eighth

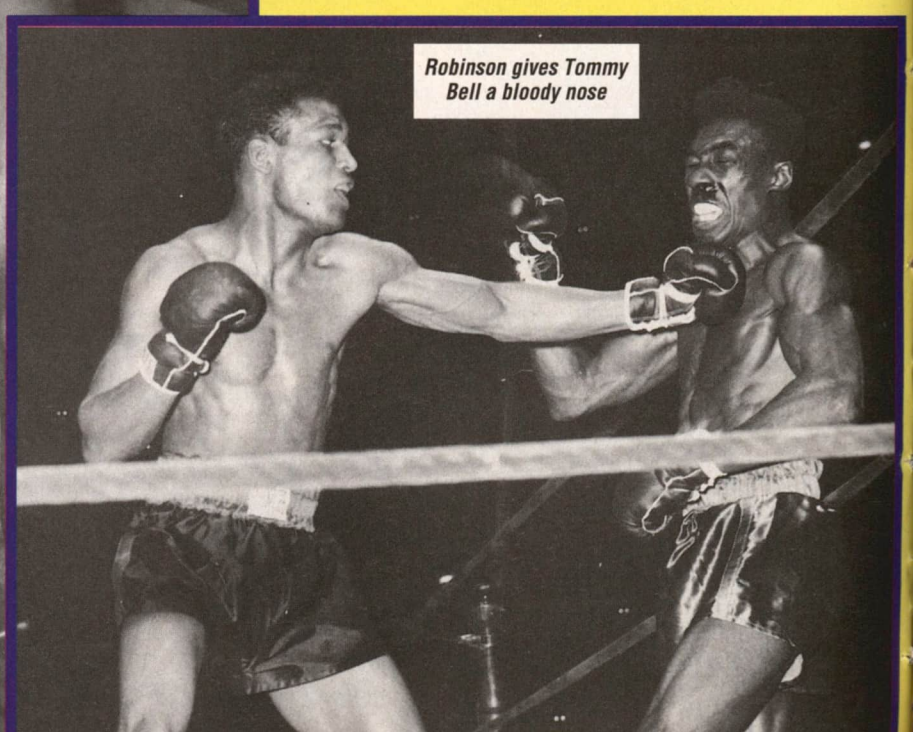
SUGAR RAY ROBINSON



Robinson's strengths: He had magnificent footwork, balance, reflexes, and precision, extremely quick hands and feet, a vicious killer instinct, and could knock out a man with a single hook or cross (79 knockouts in 124 fights prior to vacating welterweight title). He was wonderfully courageous with a great chin (five knockdowns in 202 fights). After winning all his amateur fights, he became the world's best lightweight and then the top welterweight for five years before getting a title shot. He defended the 147-pound title five times and beat five welterweight champions. His sole loss in his first 132 fights came against the 160-pound Jake LaMotta (Robinson, who then weighed 144½, beat LaMotta the five other times they met). Robinson won the middleweight title five times and was beaten only by the heat in his bid for the light heavy title.

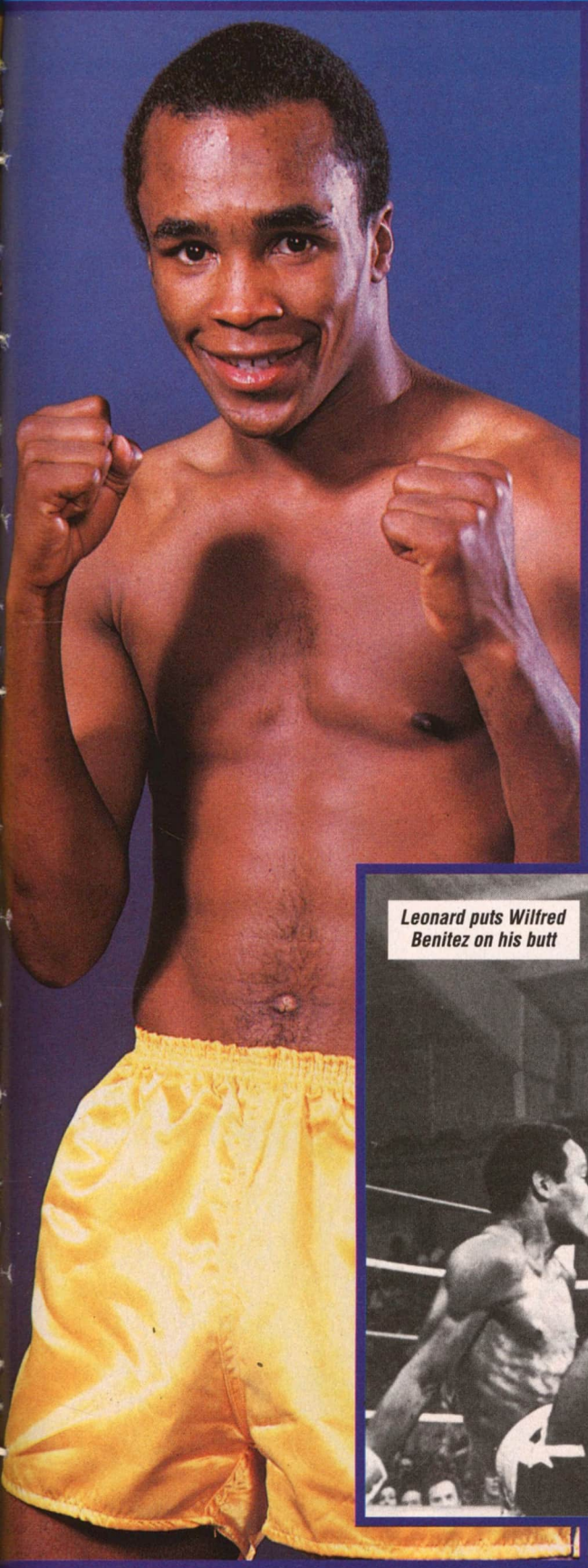
Robinson's weaknesses: He took too many punches and was not as elusive as Leonard. He was dropped twice as a welterweight. Kid Gavilan twice fought him close, and Jose Basora and Henry Brimm drew with him. Some say he avoided Charley Burley in 1949-'50.

Leonard's strengths: He combined blinding speed of foot and hand with heavy power (24 knockouts in 34 fights prior to moving up to middleweight) and tactical brilliance. He was a dazzling combination puncher who used every blow in the book, and he had a sound defense thanks to his finely tuned reflexes and his mastery of blocking and parrying. He was tough, brave, had a good chin (never dropped at welterweight)



Robinson gives Tommy Bell a bloody nose

vs. SUGAR RAY LEONARD

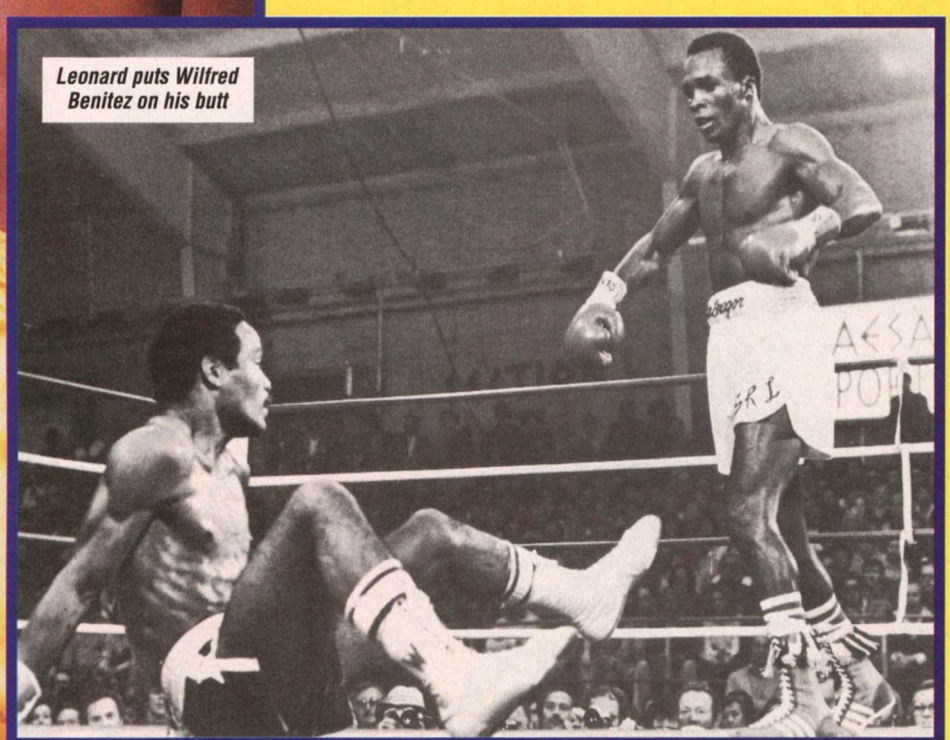


and was extremely versatile, sometimes stealing rounds with final-minute bursts, flurrying off the ropes, or brawling to save the day. He outboxed the slickest boxers (Wilfred Benitez) and outfought the hardest punchers (Tommy Hearns). He lost a close one by going toe-to-toe with Roberto Duran, but jabbed him silly in the return. He beat four current or future Hall of Famers: Benitez, Duran, Hearns, and Marvin Hagler.

Leonard's weaknesses: Showed hints of vulnerability even before his eye troubles. Duran outbrawled him. Benitez and Ayub Kalule frequently made him miss. He was dropped by Kevin Howard, was perhaps fortunate to gain a split decision against Hagler (refusing him a return), and lucky to get a draw with Hearns, who dropped him twice in the rematch. Donny Lalonde dropped him, Terry Norris dropped him twice and outboxed him, and finally, Hector Camacho dropped and stopped him. But by then Leonard was 40.

Style matchup: Both men were quick movers who mounted blinding attacks. The 5'11" Robinson usually boxed from long range, but he did so with perpetual aggression. The 5'10" Leonard could jab and move and could also slug it out in the trenches.

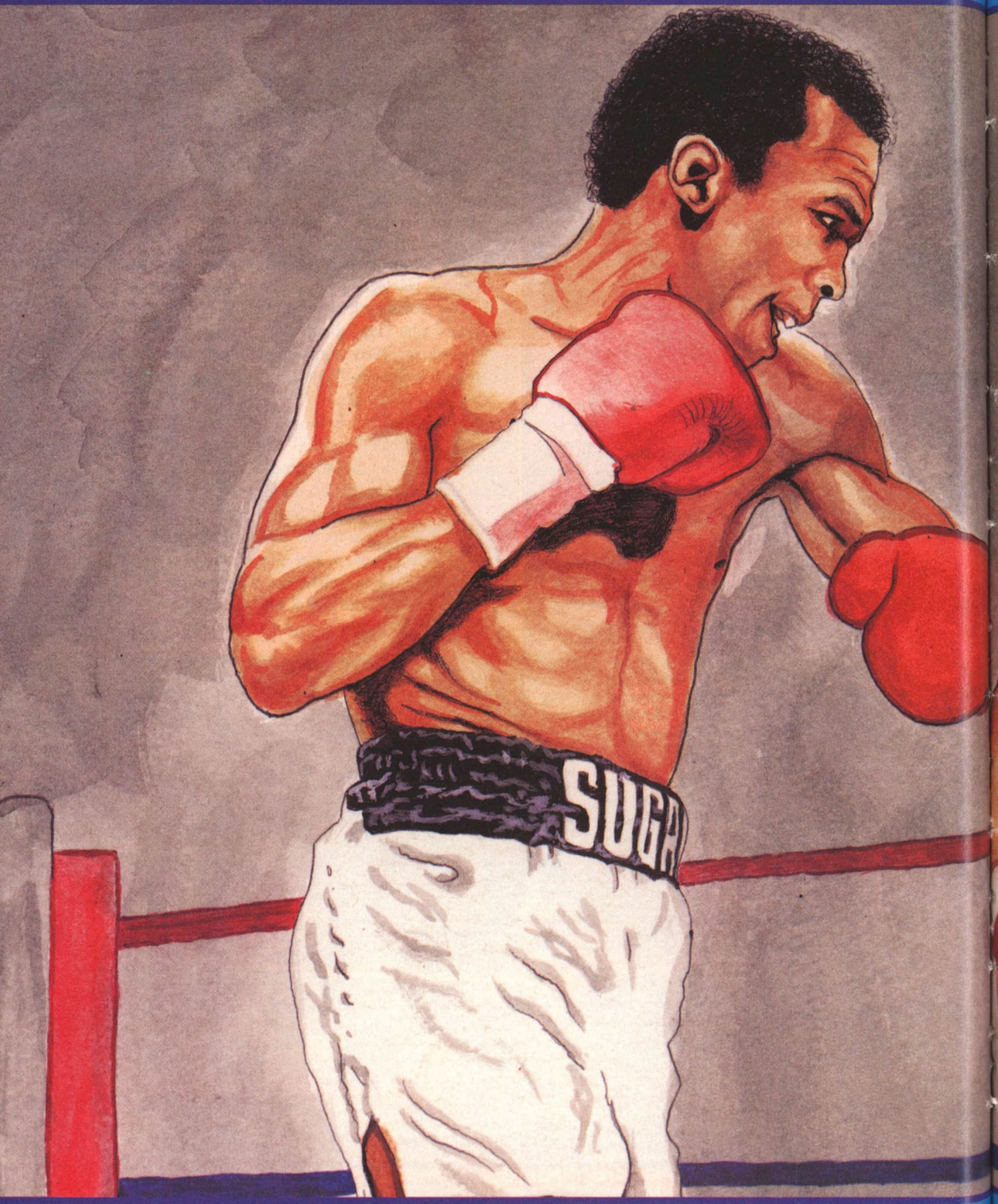
Outcome: Up against a taller man who can match his speed, Leonard loses three rounds and turns fighter, surprising his rival with his aggression. A retreating Robinson drops Leonard with a perfect left hook in round seven. Leonard claws his way back, and it's nip and tuck the rest of the way. Each judge gives it to the original Sugar Ray by two points.



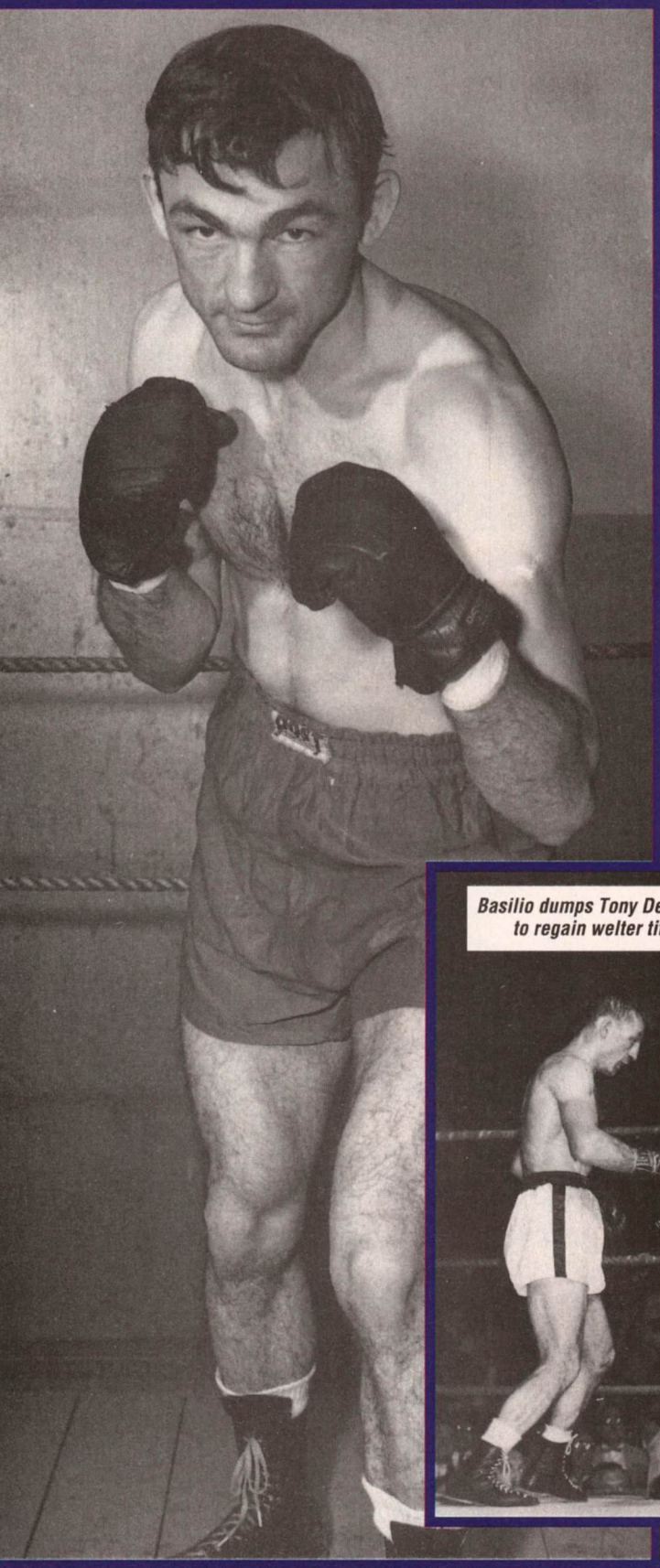
Leonard puts Wilfred Benitez on his butt

SUGAR RAY LEONARD vs SUGAR RAY ROBINSON

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER



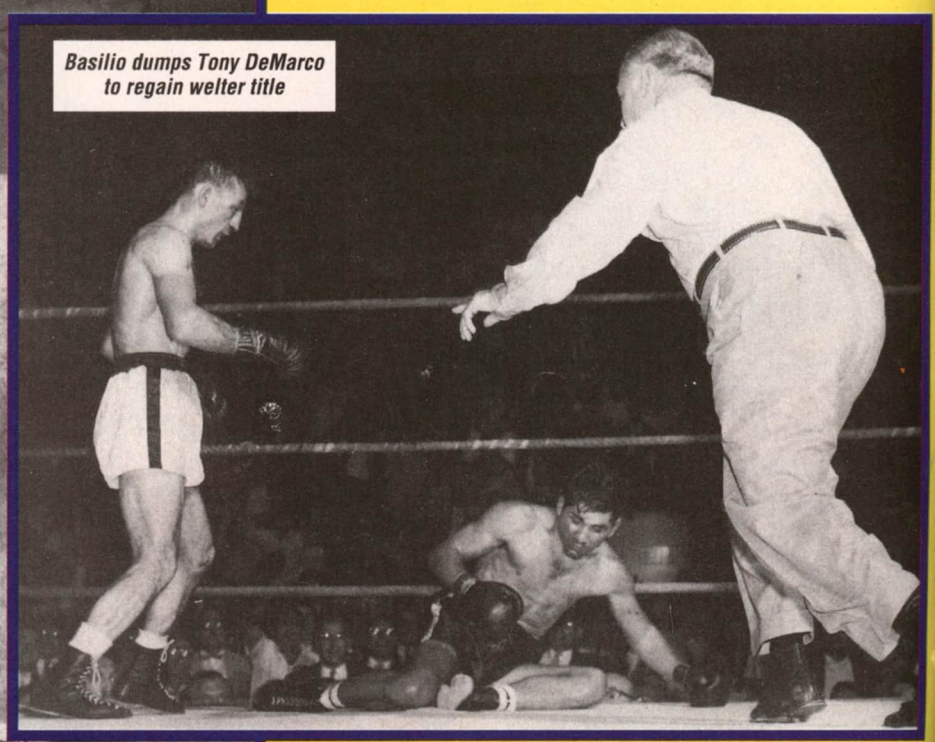
CARMEN BASILIO



Basilio's strengths: He was a tough, vigorous, aggressive, and extremely busy fighter who relished a battle at close quarters and proved his strength against bigger men. Basilio was an expert bodypuncher with a granite chin, a more-than-competent defense, and immense stamina. He had one spell when his only losses in 32 bouts came via split decisions against Kid Gavilan and Ray Robinson, and a robbery against Johnny Saxton. He twice held the world welterweight title before outpointing Robinson for the middleweight title. Other outstanding fighters he beat were Billy Graham, Ike Williams, Tony DeMarco (twice), Saxton (twice), and Don Jordan.

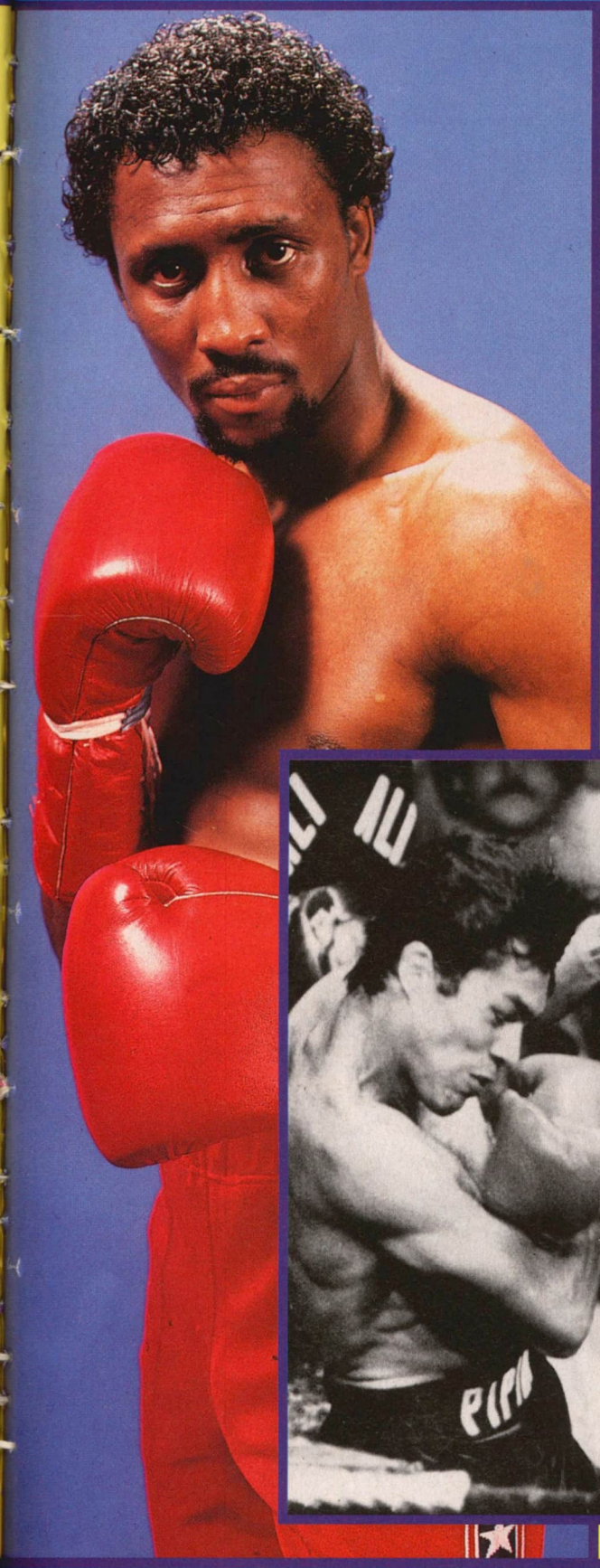
Basilio's weaknesses: He was a short man (5'61/2") who had trouble with taller, quicker boxers (such as Robinson, Graham, Gavilan, Saxton, and Chuck Davey, all of whom beat him). His record shows 16 losses and seven draws in 79 fights, and it's worth noting that 19 of those 23 blemishes happened at welterweight. He's best known for his two wars with Robinson, but by then the 36-year-old Sugar Ray was past his prime. Basilio was not a huge puncher (just 27 knockouts) and his face was vulnerable to cuts and swelling.

Hearns' strengths: A huge welterweight at 6'1", he was a brilliant boxer and among the hardest punchers in the division's history, going 31-1 (29) at 147 pounds. His right cross could take out cruiserweights, and he was a brutal bodypuncher. He defended the WBA title four times before losing to Ray



Basilio dumps Tony DeMarco to regain welter title

vs. THOMAS HEARNS

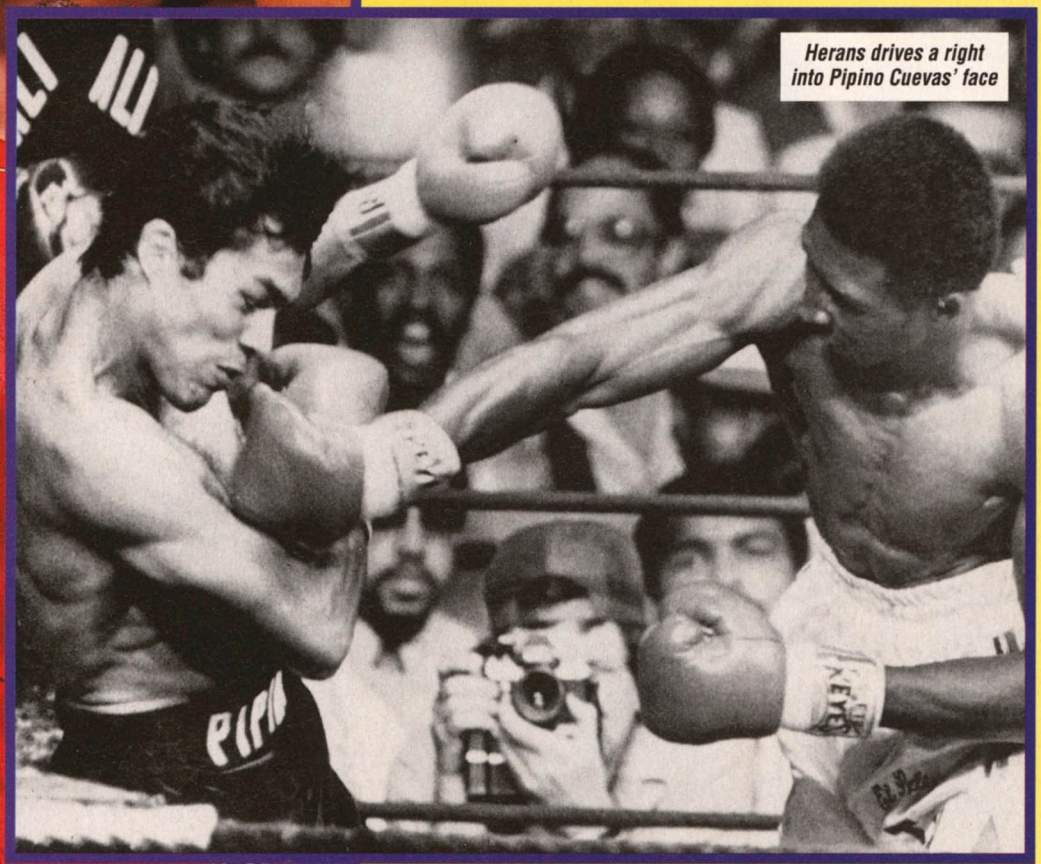


Leonard. He won the WBC light middleweight title by outboxing master boxer Wilfred Benitez and the WBC light heavyweight title by outpunching the brawling Dennis Andries. He also outjabbed the jabber in Virgil Hill. All told, he beat 10 titleholders.

Hearns' weaknesses: He sometimes had problems with stronger, more aggressive fighters who could force him back, and he did not have a great chin (three kayo defeats). When Leonard was unable to outbox him, he turned fighter and won. Iran Barkley stopped him in three at middleweight and outpointed him at light heavyweight. Marvin Hagler iced him in three. Even Juan Roldan rocked him several times at middleweight, as did Leonard in their return.

Style matchup: Hearns used his 78-inch reach to work behind his quick, stiff jab before breaking opponents with bodyshots or blasting them with a right to the chin. Basilio attacked incessantly, using his strength to work over his opponents on the inside.

Outcome: Basilio drives Hearns into the ropes, roughing him up with hooks and low blows. Emanuel Steward tells Hearns to jab and move, and by round five, Basilio's face is marking up. Hearns hurts him with a left hook to the ribs early in round seven, and a minute later ends the fight with a perfect right cross to the jaw.

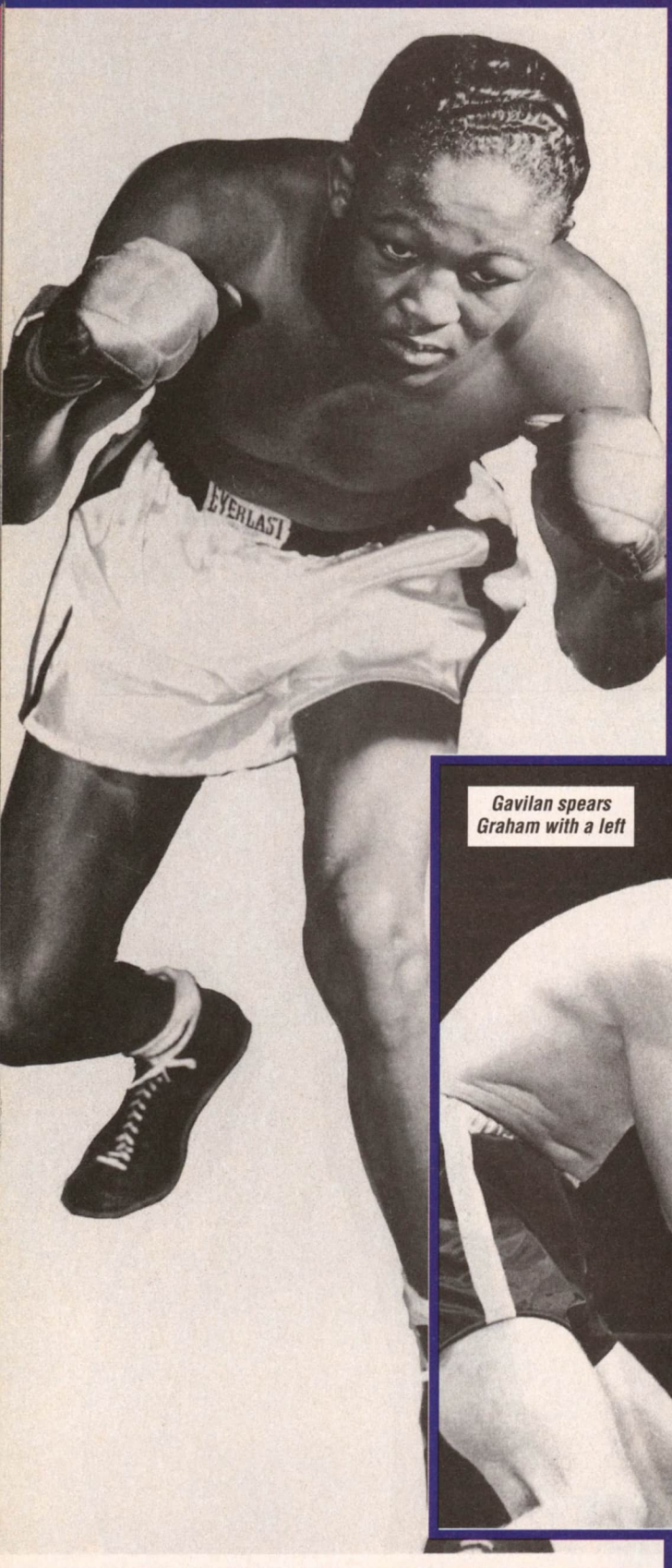


Herans drives a right into Pipino Cuevas' face

THOMAS HEARNS vs CARMEN BASILIO

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER

KID GAVILAN VS



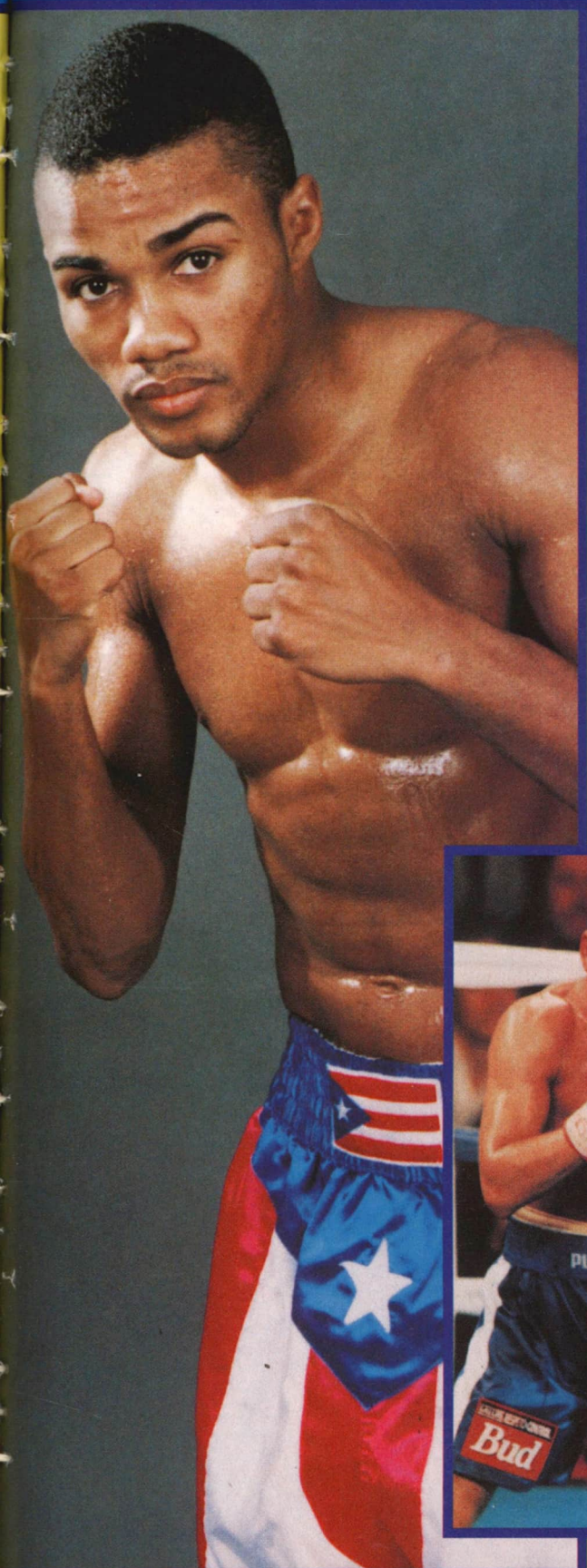
Gavilan's strengths: A clever boxer, brilliant at blocking and slipping, he was also a sharp combination puncher with quick hands and reflexes, outstanding footwork, and a firm chin (never stopped and only dropped once in 143 fights). He's best known for his bolo punch—a hook-uppercut hybrid. After dropping two close decisions to Ray Robinson, he won the welterweight title by outboxing Johnny Bratton and defended it seven times before losing it to Johnny Saxton on a diabolical verdict. At his best (1949-'54), he had a spell when he went unbeaten in 28 fights. He came close to winning the middleweight title, losing by majority decision to Carl "Bobo" Olson. Also beat Hall of Famers Carmen Basilio, Ike Williams, and Beau Jack.

Gavilan's weaknesses: He was not a heavy puncher (28 knockouts) and did not always take the game seriously. There were rumors of several fixed fights. He lost 30 and drew six (although most of those losses happened after he lost the title). It's true, he suffered some terrible decisions, but he had at least one lucky nod (he should have lost his title to Billy Graham in 1951, although he clearly won the return) and came close to being stopped by Basilio.

Trinidad's strengths: An attacking boxer-fighter with a heavy punch in both hands, especially the left hook. He was

Gavilan spears Graham with a left

FELIX TRINIDAD



always dangerous, particularly after being dropped, and was one of the best finishers in the game. He had a perfect welterweight record, 36-0 (30), making 14 defenses of the IBF title and becoming the first man genuinely to beat Pernell Whitaker before unifying against Oscar De La Hoya. He spoiled David Reid's unbeaten record to win the WBA super welter title, unified by stopping the unbeaten Fernando Vargas, and won the WBA middleweight title by stopping William Joppy.

Trinidad's weaknesses: He did not have a great chin (down 10 times and stopped once). De La Hoya (who was robbed) was too fast for him, and Bernard Hopkins outboxed, outpunched, and outmuscled him. He struggled with the 147-pound limit (and would have had it worse in the era of same-day weigh-ins).

Style matchup: The 5'10½" Gavilan was a flamboyant performer who liked to do an Ali-like jig in the ring, but once he got down to business, he was a flashy, quick-moving boxer who threw lots of punches and liked to trade. The 5'11" Trinidad was a clever stalker who picked his devastating punches with care.

Outcome: Gavilan shades the early rounds with his higher work rate and drops Trinidad for a short count in round four. The Puerto Rican gets up and sinks one into the Cuban's groin, earning a point deduction. He then gets to work, landing hard punches, and a round later, drops Gavilan with a right. The heavier-hitting Trinidad pulls ahead at the halfway mark, but in the championship rounds, the busier Gavilan has more in the tank and comes through with a majority decision.

Trinidad finishes strong against De La Hoya

KID GAVILAN vs FELIX TRINIDAD

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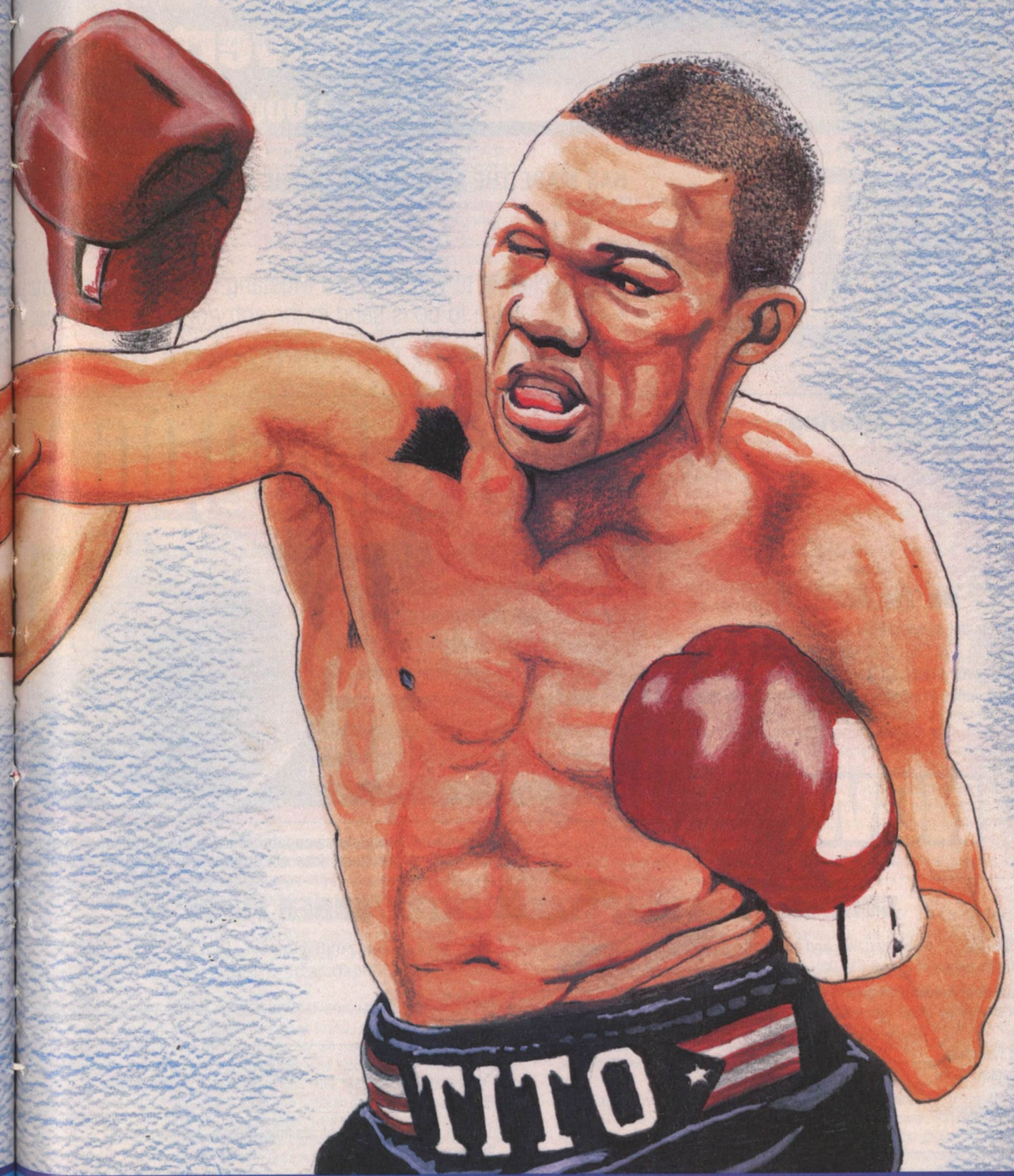

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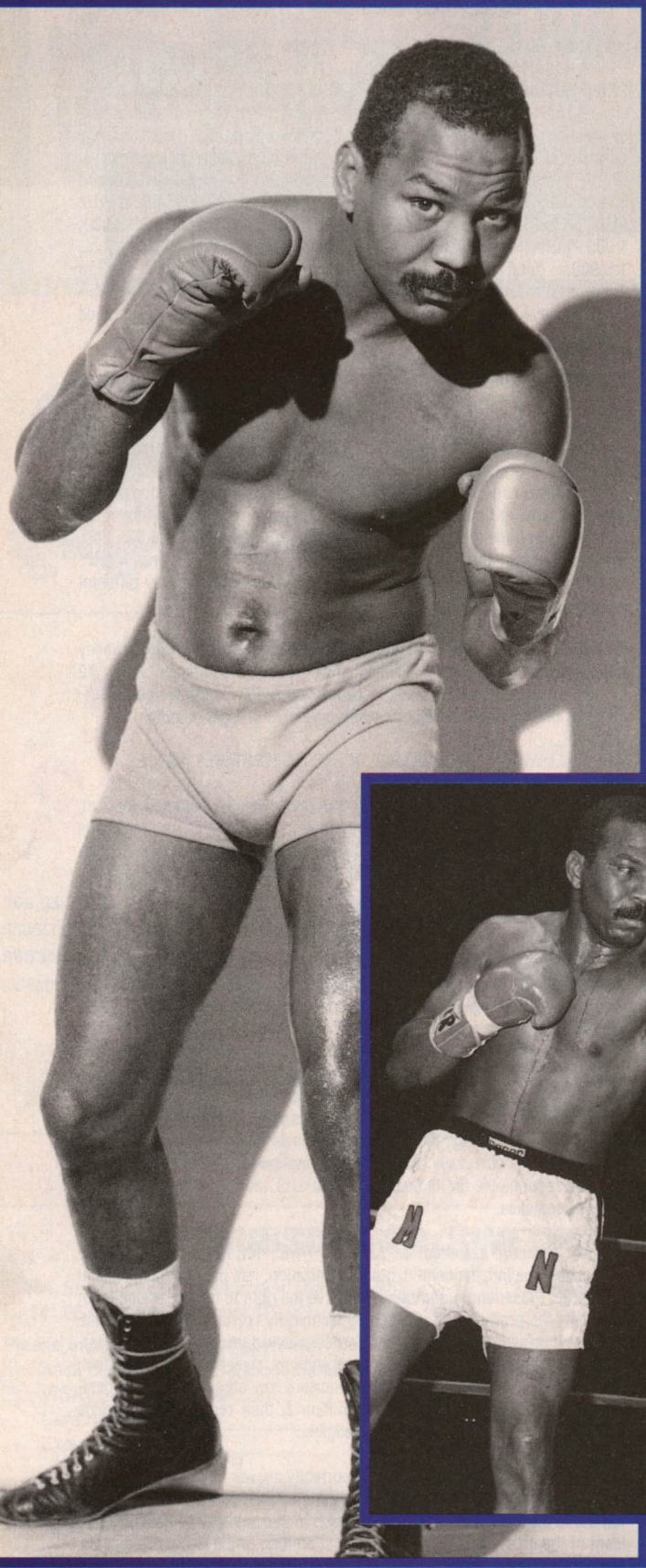
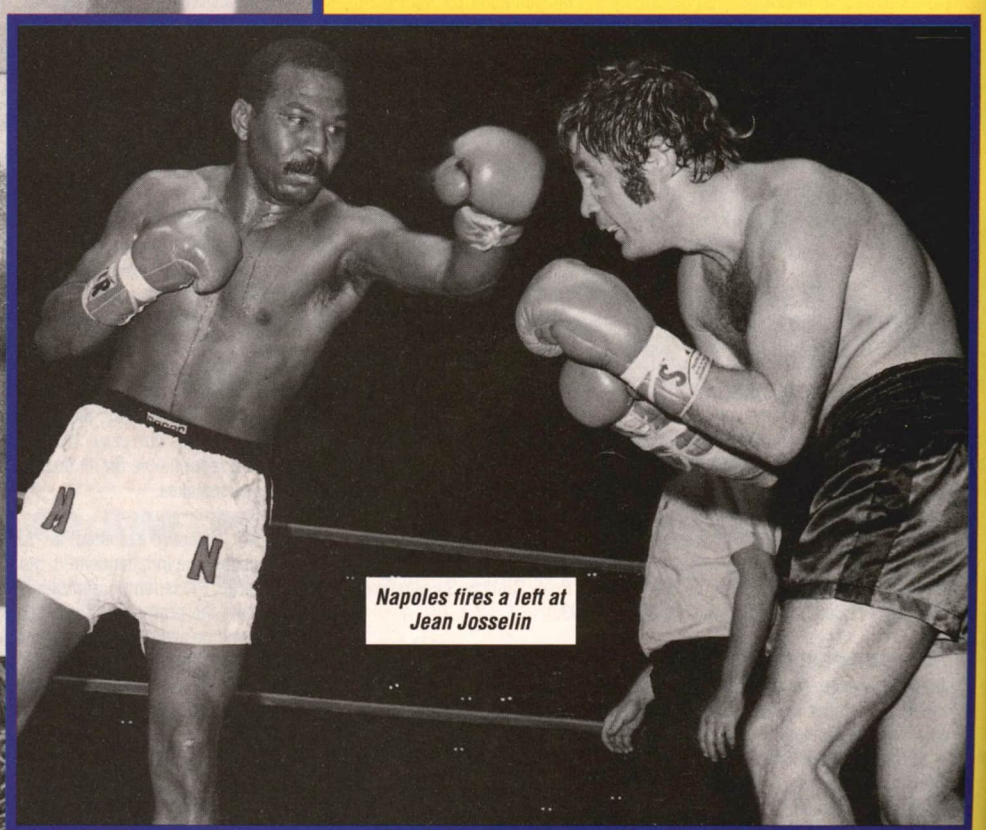
JOSE NAPOLES VS.



Napoles' strengths: "Mantequilla" had it all. He was elusive, fast, cool, excellent at picking and timing punches, and had phantom-like reflexes and a cracking left hook (54 knockouts in 84 bouts). He started at featherweight, excelled at lightweight, beat several top junior welterweight contenders, and finally got a title shot at welterweight in his 60th bout when, weighing 143 pounds, he stopped Curtis Cokes. After licking Cokes again and then Emile Griffith, he suffered a cut-eye loss to Billy Backus (his only blemish in a 38-fight spell), but regained the title in a rematch, and held it for 4½ more years, totaling 14 successful defenses.

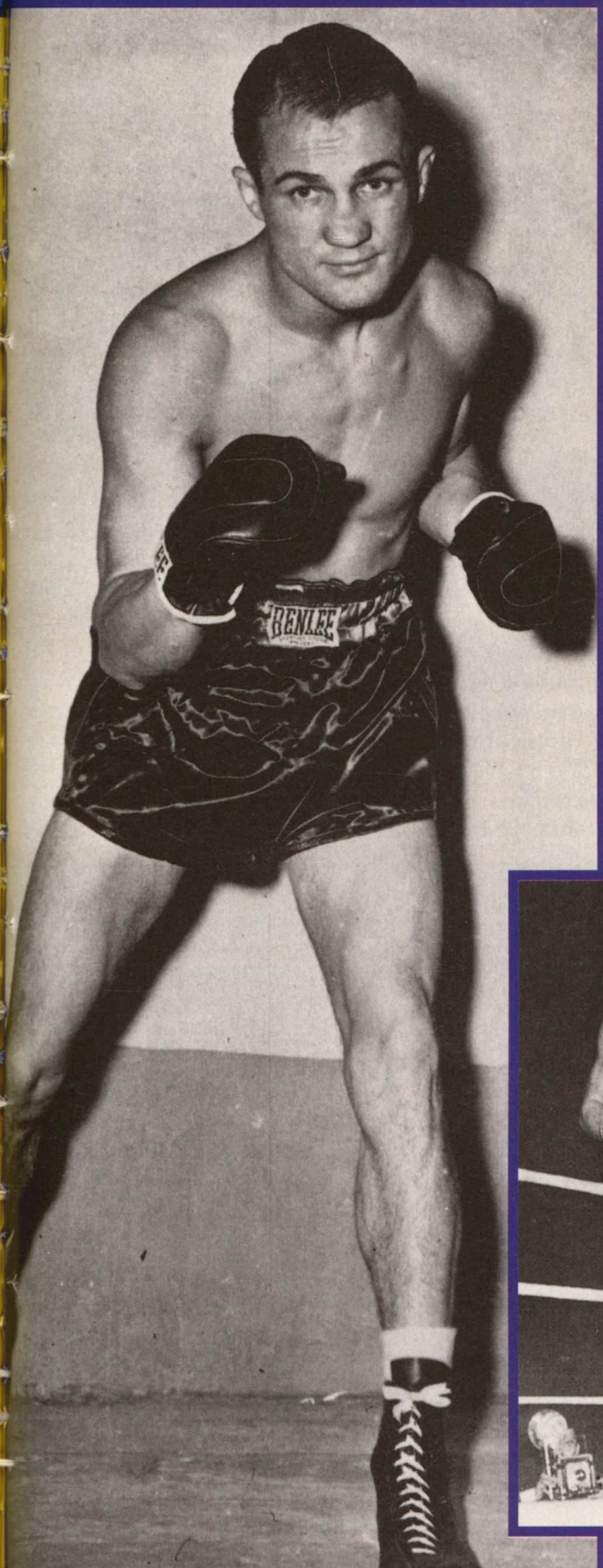
Napoles' weaknesses: He could have been magnificent at lightweight and junior welterweight, but his lack of size and strength put him a notch below the Sugar Rays at welterweight. Even the journeyman Backus pushed him back. John Stracey did the same in Napoles' final bout, while Carlos Monzon battered him at middleweight. He was vulnerable to cuts and swelling, and his chin was only so-so. Four of his seven losses came inside the distance.

Zivic's strengths: As tough and courageous as they come, he was also one of the dirtiest fighters ever (low blows, thumbs, elbows, headbutts, lacing the eyes, backhanders). Zivic fought with a win-at-all-costs mentality, throwing plenty of leather in an attempt to overwhelm opponents (80 of his 159



Napoles fires a left at Jean Josselin

FRITZIE ZIVIC

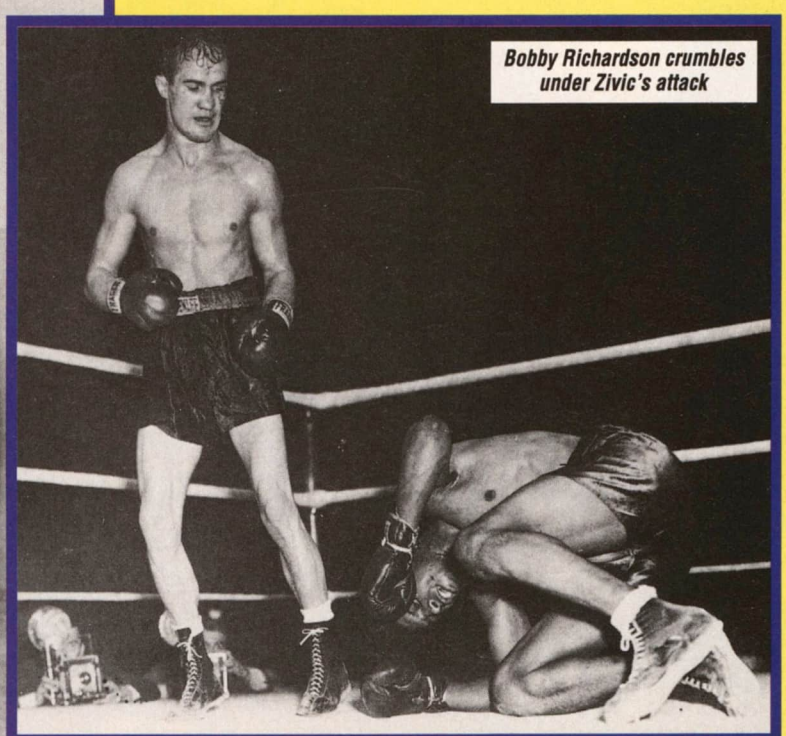


wins came via stoppage). He started at featherweight, but became a strong welterweight who regularly fought bigger men. He reached his peak in 1940 when, in his 116th fight, he outpointed Henry Armstrong for the world title and then stopped him in the return. Other outstanding men he beat were Jake LaMotta, Charley Burley, Lew Jenkins, Sammy Angott, and Freddie Cochrane. His reign lasted just nine months, but he fought 91 more times afterward.

Zivic's weaknesses: He was neither a great boxer (64 losses and 9 draws out of 233 fights) nor a huge puncher. He was relatively easy to outbox if you could keep your distance, and most elite boxers he fought beat him more often than he beat them. He lost three times on clean knockouts and once on a stoppage.

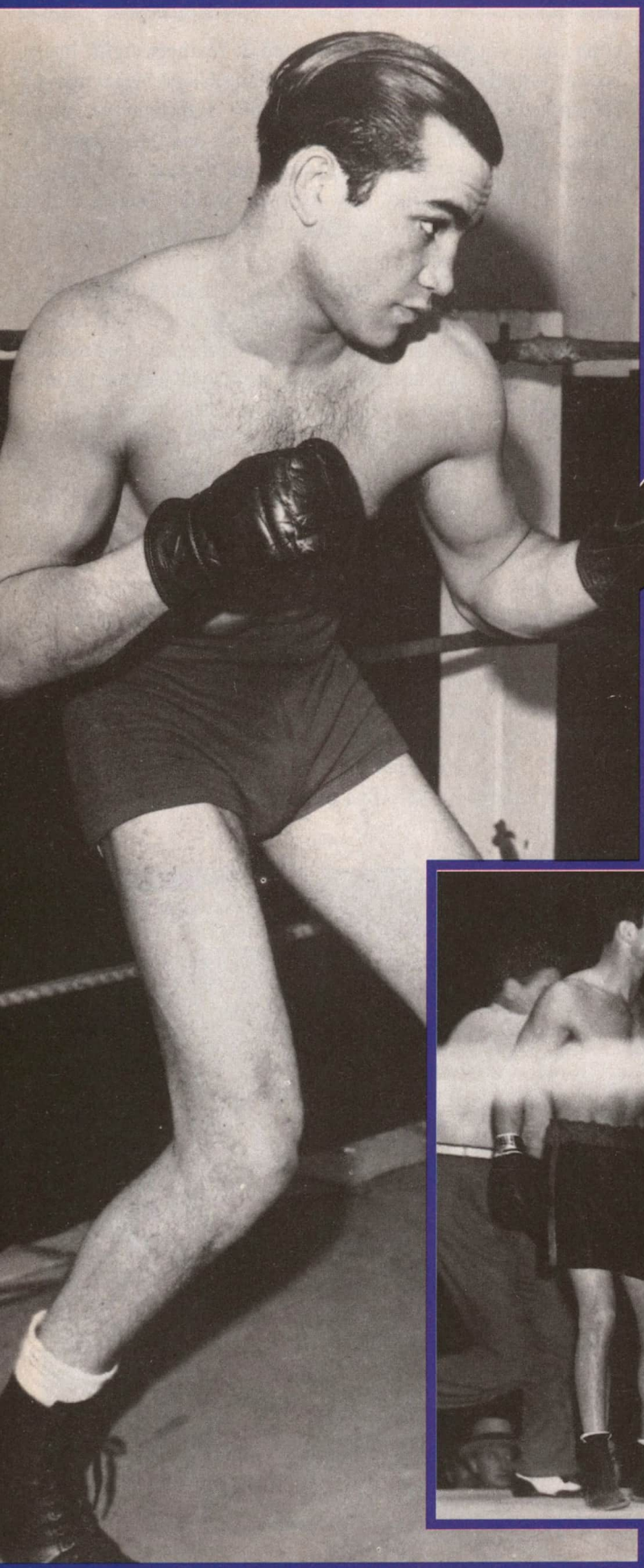
Style matchup: The 5'9", 145-pound Zivic liked to get up close where he could dig in with his fists, thumbs, and elbows. The 5'7", 144-pound Napoles had quick footwork and could work effectively at any range, moving in and out to land sharp clusters of punches.

Outcome: Zivic presses forward in a bid to crowd Napoles, but the Cuban slides out of range and peppers him with accurate punches, dropping him in round five. In the seventh, however, Zivic digs in with his thumb, and Napoles' right eye swells. Zivic is twice warned for low blows, but gets away with using his elbow and head, opening a nasty cut above the right eye in round 12. Napoles keeps his distance, but is hampered by obscured vision. His face is a mess, but he wins a unanimous decision.



Bobby Richardson crumbles under Zivic's attack

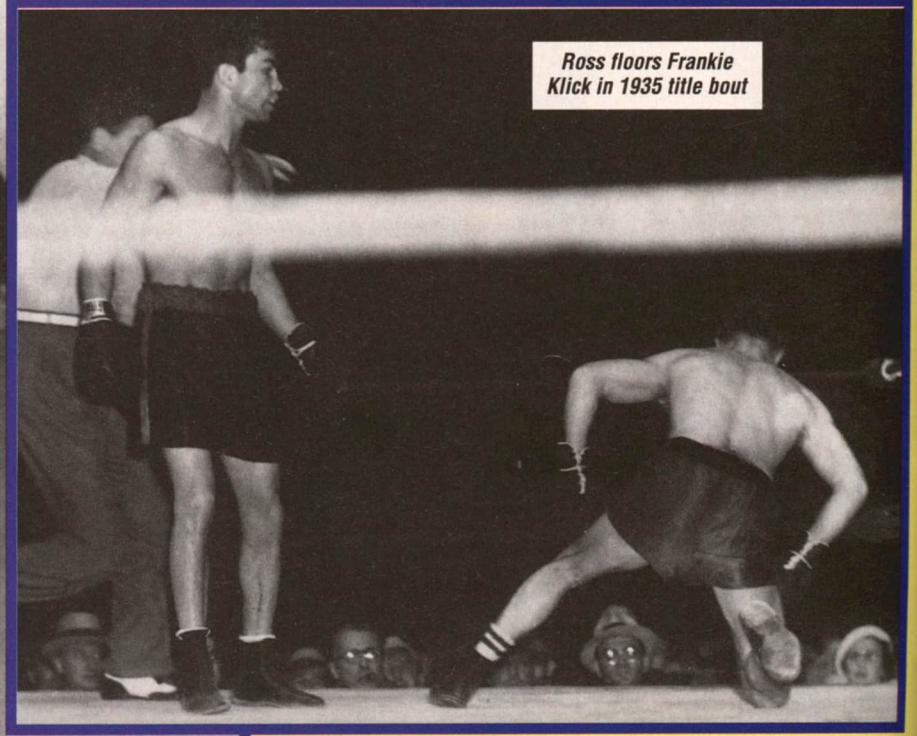
BARNEY ROSS



Ross' strengths: A sharp combination puncher with great footwork, he was an expert at blocking and parrying, had one of the best chins in the game (never stopped in 81 bouts), and boasted remarkable depths of courage and stamina. He beat Tony Canzoneri for the world lightweight and junior welterweight titles in his 49th fight, and a year later, in 1934, outpointed another Hall of Famer, Jimmy McLarnin, for the welterweight title. He lost the return on a split decision, but won the rubber match in 1935 and reigned for three years. He won 13 and drew one of his 16 world title fights.

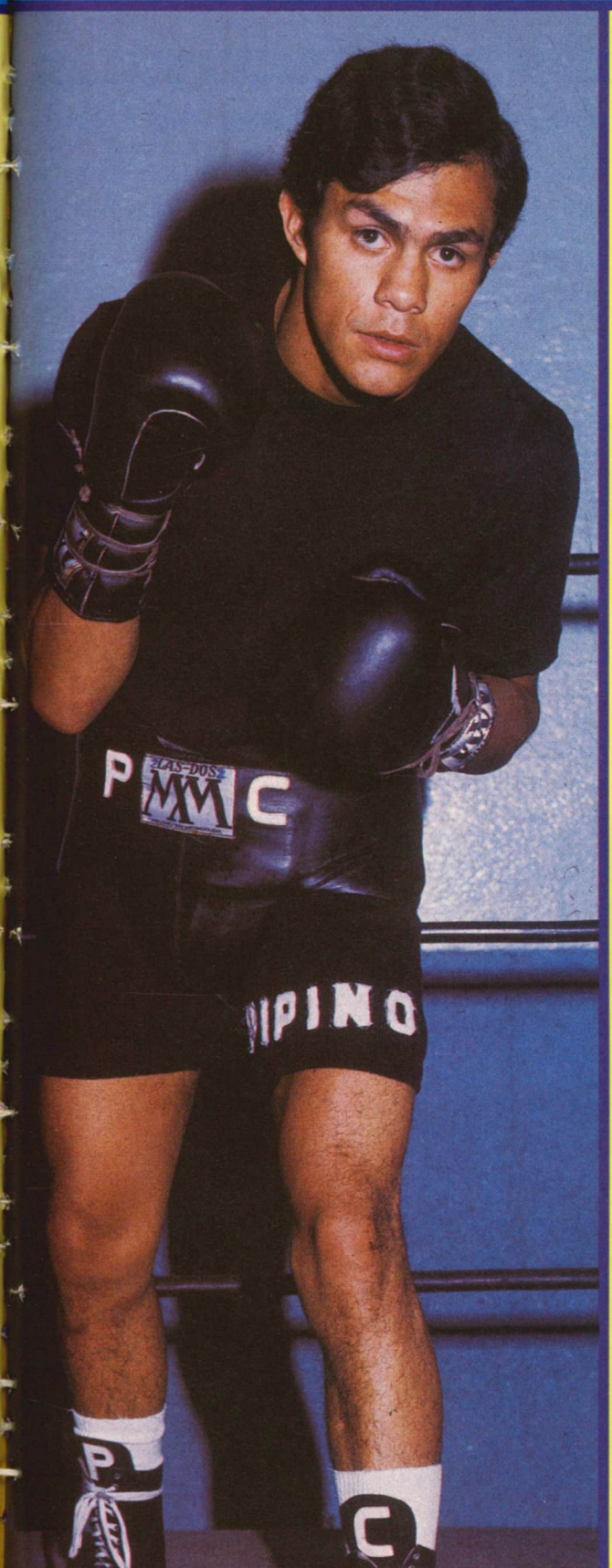
Ross' weaknesses: Never much more than a junior welterweight (he was 141 pounds in his rubber match with Jimmy McLarnin and 142 in his final bout against Henry Armstrong), he was not strong at welterweight and a light puncher (only one of his 16 world title fights ended inside the distance). In his final fight, featherweight champion Armstrong worked him over on the inside, battering him all over the ring. Four of Ross' world title bout wins were on split or majority decisions.

Cuevas' strengths: A huge puncher with both hands, his left hook was one of the hardest in welterweight history. He could end a fight with a single blow (31 of his 35 wins came via quick route). He stopped Angel Espada in two rounds to win the WBA title in 1976 and successfully defended it 11 times over the next four years, with 10 of those wins coming inside the distance. His power enabled him to overcome a vari-



Ross floors Frankie Klick in 1935 title bout

vs. PIPINO CUEVAS

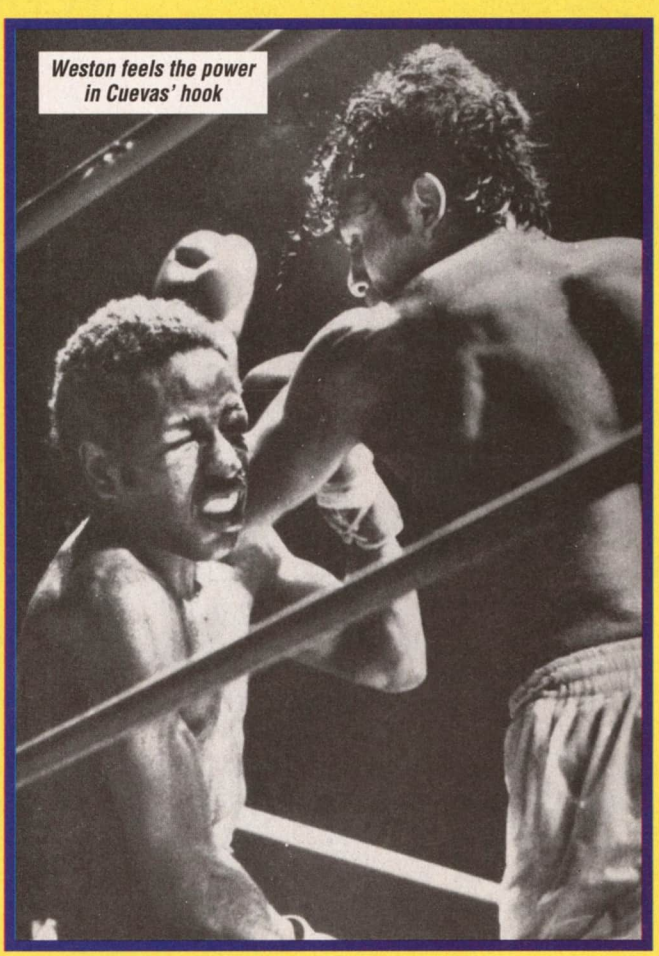


ety of styles, including slick boxer-punchers like Espada and cuties like Harold Weston.

Cuevas' weaknesses: He was a boxer of limited skill at the elite level. He was relatively easy to hit and he did not have a great chin (six kayo losses). He was no match for Thomas Hearns' accuracy, size, and power, getting blown away in two rounds, while Roberto Duran's greater skill, strength, and durability broke him in four. In all, he lost 15 of his 50 bouts, with six defeats before he won the title.

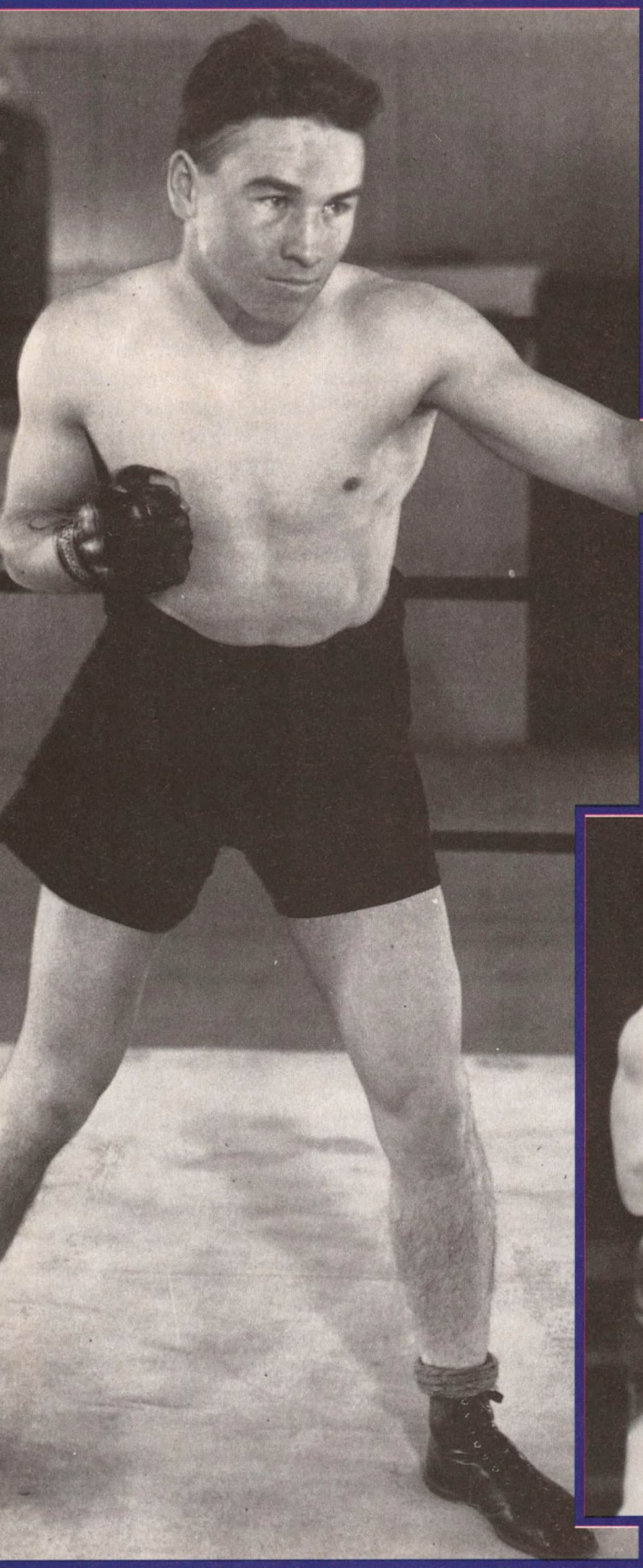
Style matchup: The 5'7" Ross was an extremely busy boxer with a sharp jab and a quick right. He would move in and out, throwing combinations. The 5'9" Cuevas fought from a crouch, always pressing forward, ready to explode with one of his bombs.

Outcome: It is immediately apparent that Cuevas is the stronger, larger man, and whenever he gets close, he manhandles Ross. The American is too skilled to get caught flush in the early rounds, but even glancing blows hurt. After losing six of the first eight rounds, Cuevas finally lands his left hook to the jaw. Ross goes down, but beats the count. For the rest of the fight, Ross is content to jab and move, and wins a clear, unanimous decision.



Weston feels the power in Cuevas' hook

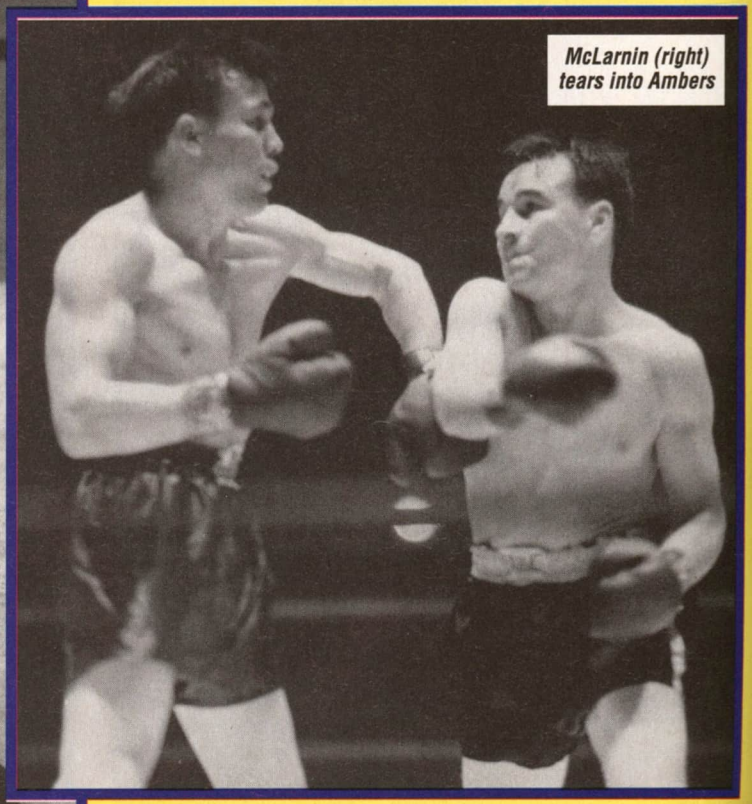
JIMMY McLARNIN



McLarnin's strengths: He was a talented boxer and a bigger puncher than his 26 percent stoppage ratio suggests, knocking out top men in five weight divisions. He had a good chin and a tight defense, and his stamina allowed him to set a frenetic pace. Starting at flyweight, he twice beat future world champion Fidel LaBarba and ended the career of Pancho Villa. He went on to pick up five wins over reigning world champions in non-title fights. After twice avenging a previous loss to lightweight champion Sammy Mandell and retiring Benny Leonard, he flattened Young Corbett III in one round to win the welterweight title, before losing it and regaining it on split decisions to Barney Ross. He ended his career with wins over two more Hall of Famers, Tony Canzoneri and Lou Ambers.

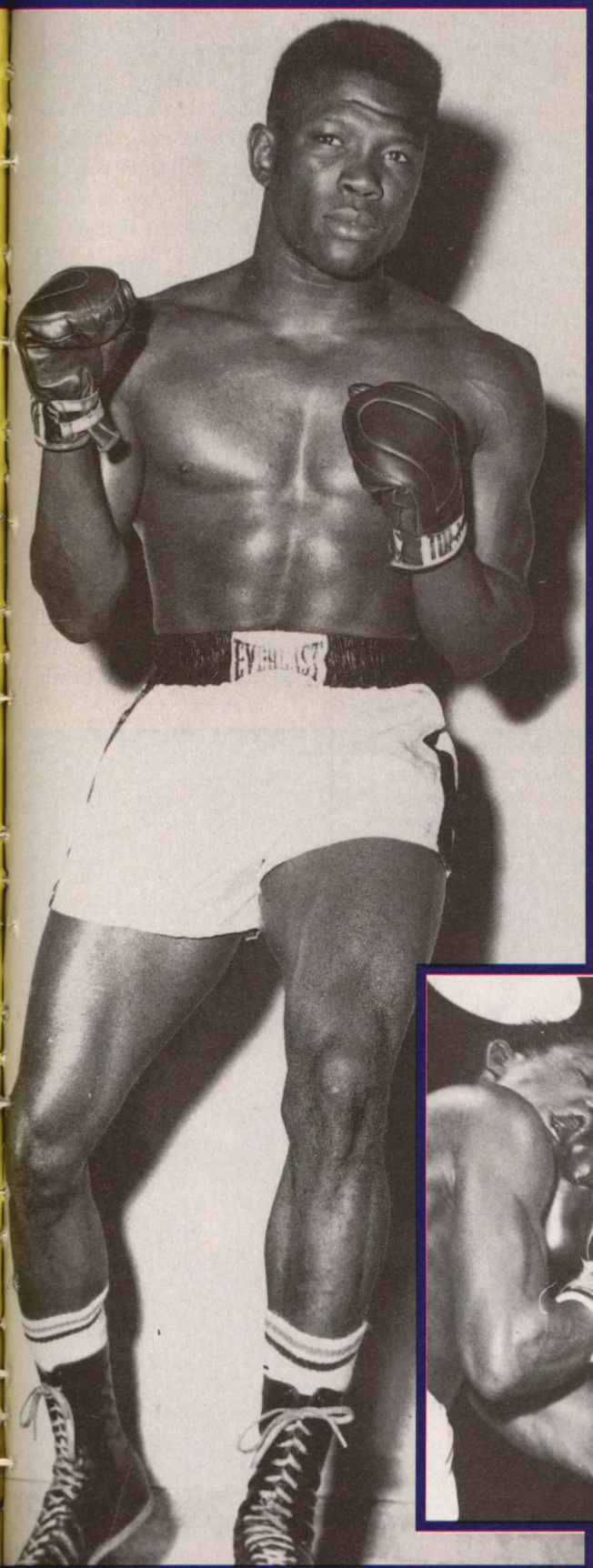
McLarnin's weaknesses: At 5'5½" and as light as 142 pounds at his welterweight peak, he was small for the division (helped by the fact that his premier rivals were no bigger). He was not as consistent a performer as either Ross or Canzoneri, with his longest unbeaten streak (31 fights) coming at flyweight and bantamweight. He was still at his peak when he retired, but his 77-fight record shows 11 losses and three draws.

Griffith's strengths: He was a consummate boxer, quick



McLarnin (right) tears into Ambers

VS. EMILE GRIFFITH

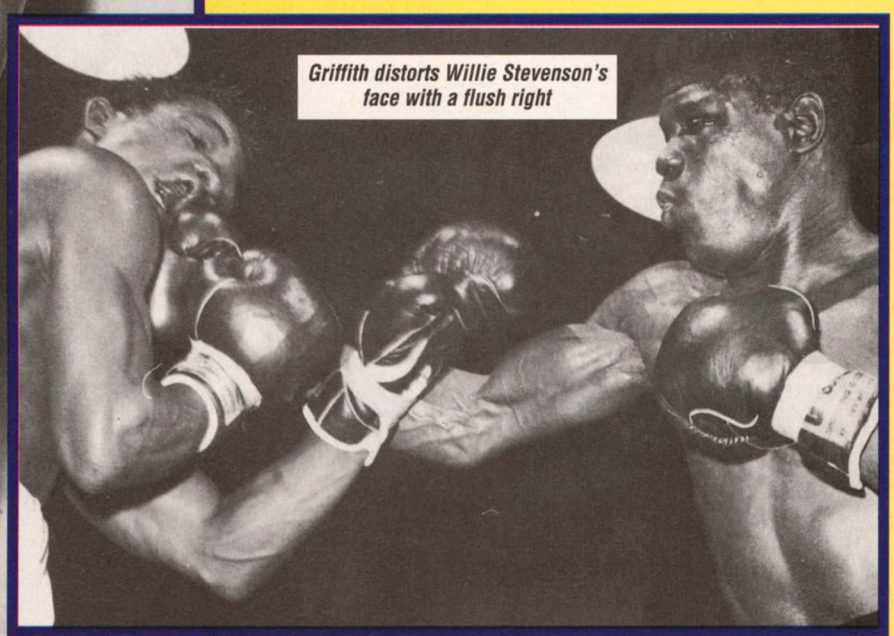


on his feet with a tight and varied defense and a wonderful array of punches, thrown in dazzling bursts. He was also very strong, with a good chin (never stopped at welterweight). He first won the world welter title by knocking out Benny "Kid" Paret in 1961, but six months later Paret regained it on a dubious split decision. In their rubber match, Griffith landed 21 unanswered blows in the 12th round, and Paret died as a result. Griffith lost and regained his title from Luis Rodriguez and totaled seven successful defenses before stepping up to decision Dick Tiger for the middleweight title, which he lost and regained against Nino Benvenuti. At 35 he still had enough to hold a peak Carlos Monzon to a hairline decision, at 36 he beat Bennie Briscoe, and at 38 he drew with Briscoe.

Griffith's weaknesses: He was not a great puncher, particularly after the Paret tragedy. He was not the most consistent boxer, sometimes losing focus, causing him to falter against lesser men. He lost 24 times and drew twice (although 13 blemishes occurred after the age of 35). He was soundly beaten by Jose Napoles in a bid to regain his welterweight title in 1969 (although he was weight-weakened).

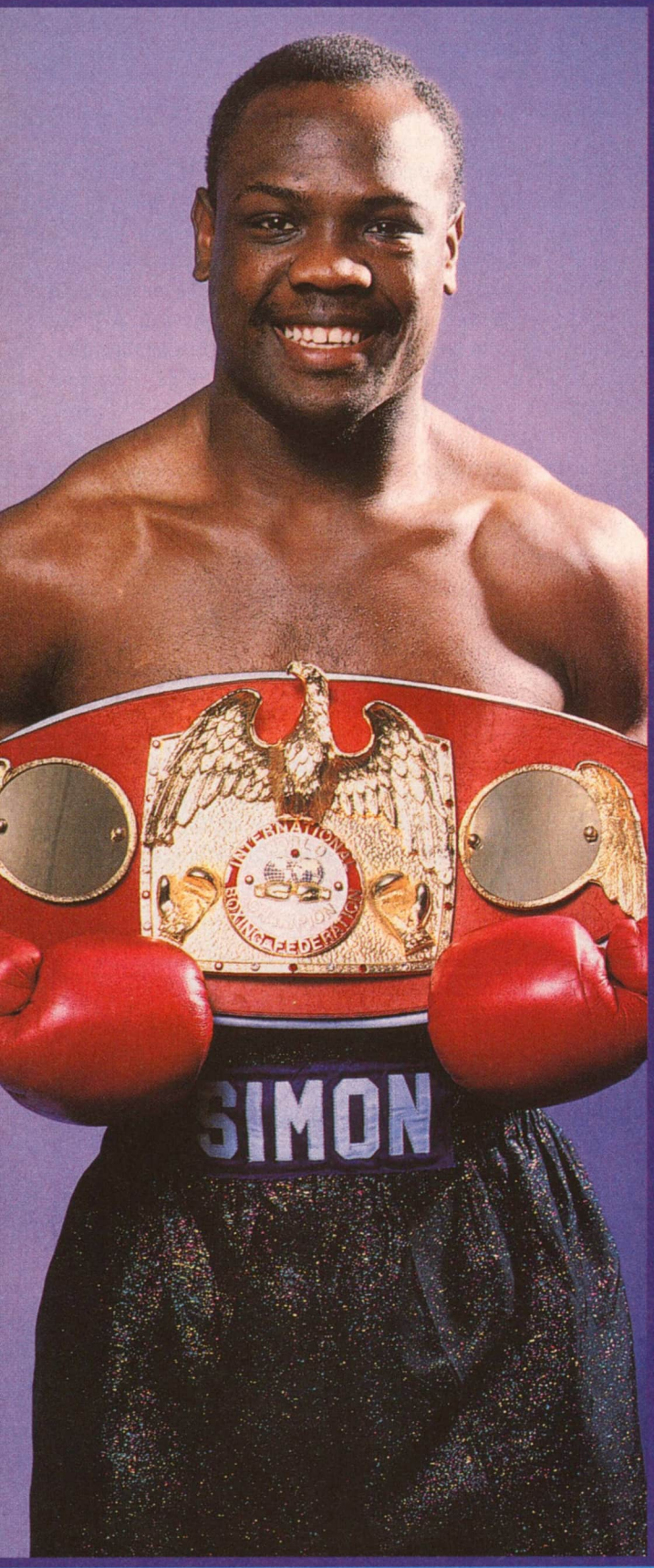
Style matchup: McLarnin was a busy boxer, moving in and out behind his jab and throwing sharp combinations. Griffith was quick on his feet, switching easily from the back foot jabbing to rapid-fire offense.

Outcome: The 5'7", muscular Griffith is the stronger man and has quicker hands. McLarnin, however, has greater experience and a heavier punch, which makes for an intriguing tactical battle, mixing speedy combination punching with defensive brilliance. There are no knockdowns, and Griffith wins a close, but clear decision.



Griffith distorts Willie Stevenson's face with a flush right

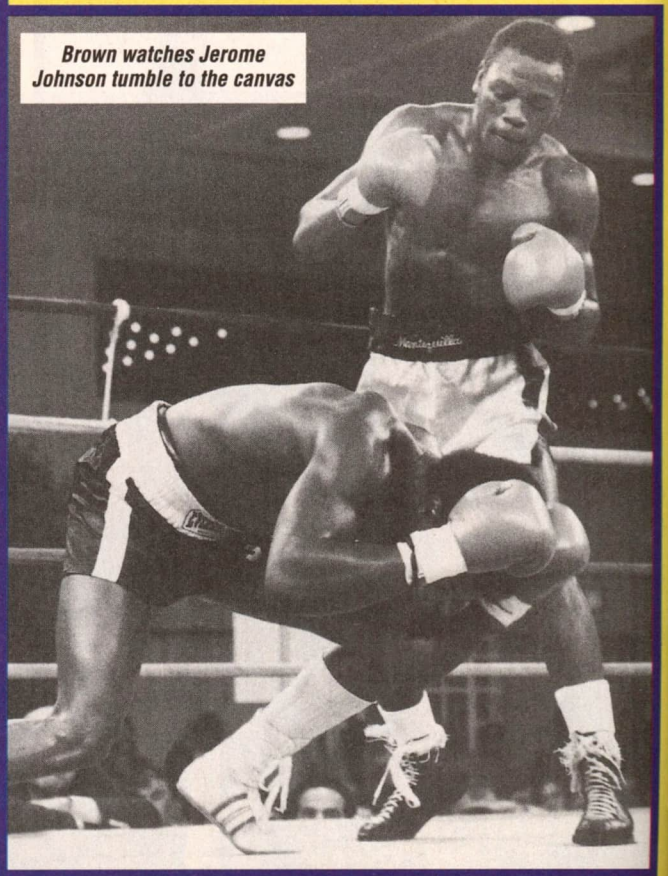
SIMON BROWN vs.



Brown's strengths: He was a strong, aggressive fighter who invariably pressed forward in a bid to overwhelm any opponent who dared to trade. He was always dangerous with his powerful left hook and right cross, scoring 26 knockouts in his 36 welterweight fights, and, at his peak, had a firm chin. He began a 3½-year reign by stopping Tyrone Trice in 14 to win the IBF title in 1988, and after eight defenses, unified by stopping his friend, WBC king Maurice Blocker, in 10 rounds. Weight troubles contributed to his points loss to Buddy McGirt, but two years later he knocked out Terry Norris in four to take the WBC super welterweight title and made one defense. He beat five titleholders.

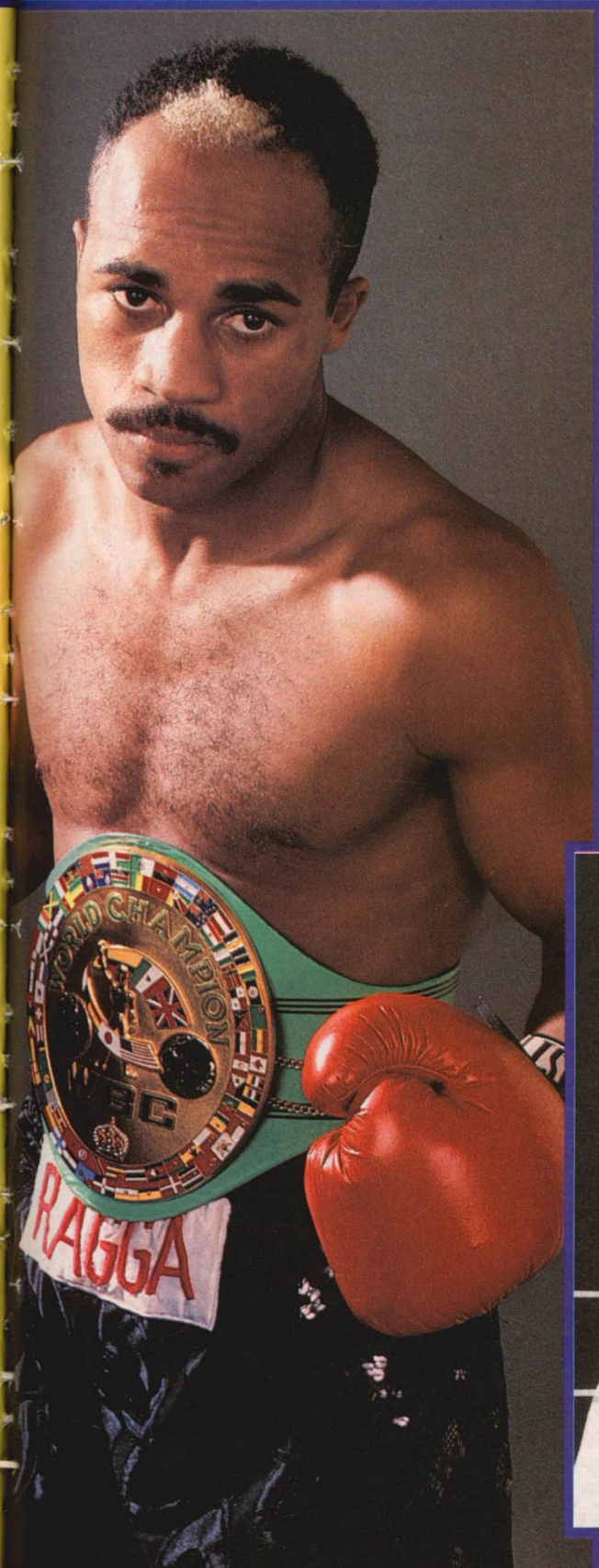
Brown's weaknesses: He was no defensive genius and struggled against elite boxers with cute skills (ceding a clear-cut decision to Marlon Starling and another wide decision in losing the welterweight title to McGirt). He declined rapidly after being outsped by Norris in their 1994 return, losing nine of his last 13.

Honeyghan's strengths: An all-action boxer-puncher who combined sound defensive skills with a strong punch in both fists and a relentless will to succeed. As he put it: "I was a bad man in the ring, a wicked man. I'll do anything to win.



Brown watches Jerome Johnson tumble to the canvas

LLOYD HONEYGHAN

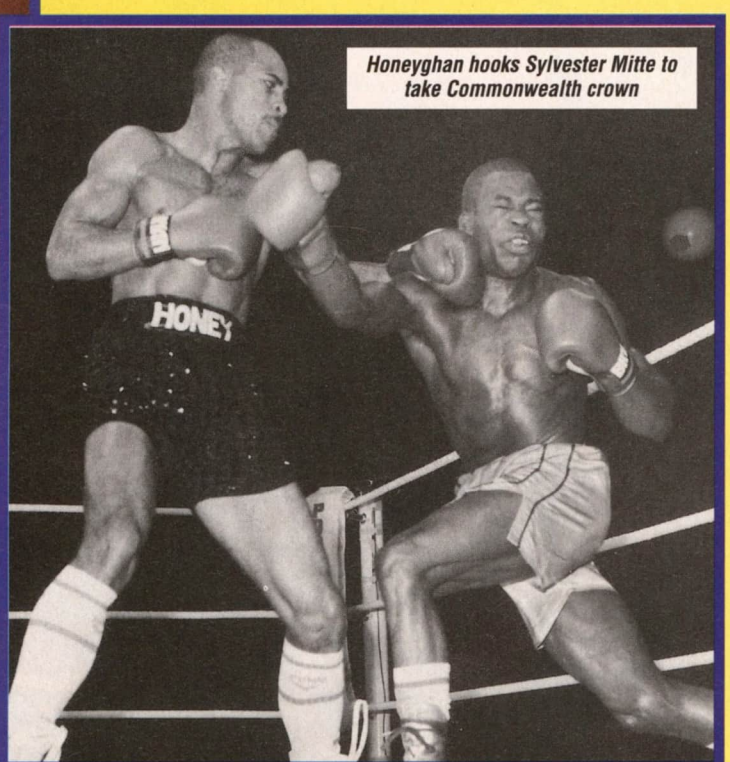


There's no Mr. Nice in there." Took on Donald Curry in 1986 with a damaged knee and hand, and yet dished out a one-sided six-round beating. After two defenses, his record stood at 31-0 (21), but he then lost a controversial technical decision to Jorge Vaca. He knocked out Vaca to regain the title, but weight problems contributed to losses against Starling and Mark Breland, and a freak hammer attack to his '93 loss against Vinny Pazienza. Beat five titlists, won six out of nine world title bouts, and retired at age 35.

Honeyghan's weaknesses: While he made excuses for each of his losses, the fact is that he couldn't cope with Starling's wily skills and heavy hooks, or with Breland's speed and long-range precision punching. After the Starling loss, Honeyghan's once-solid chin let him down. In all, he was stopped four times and dropped nine times.

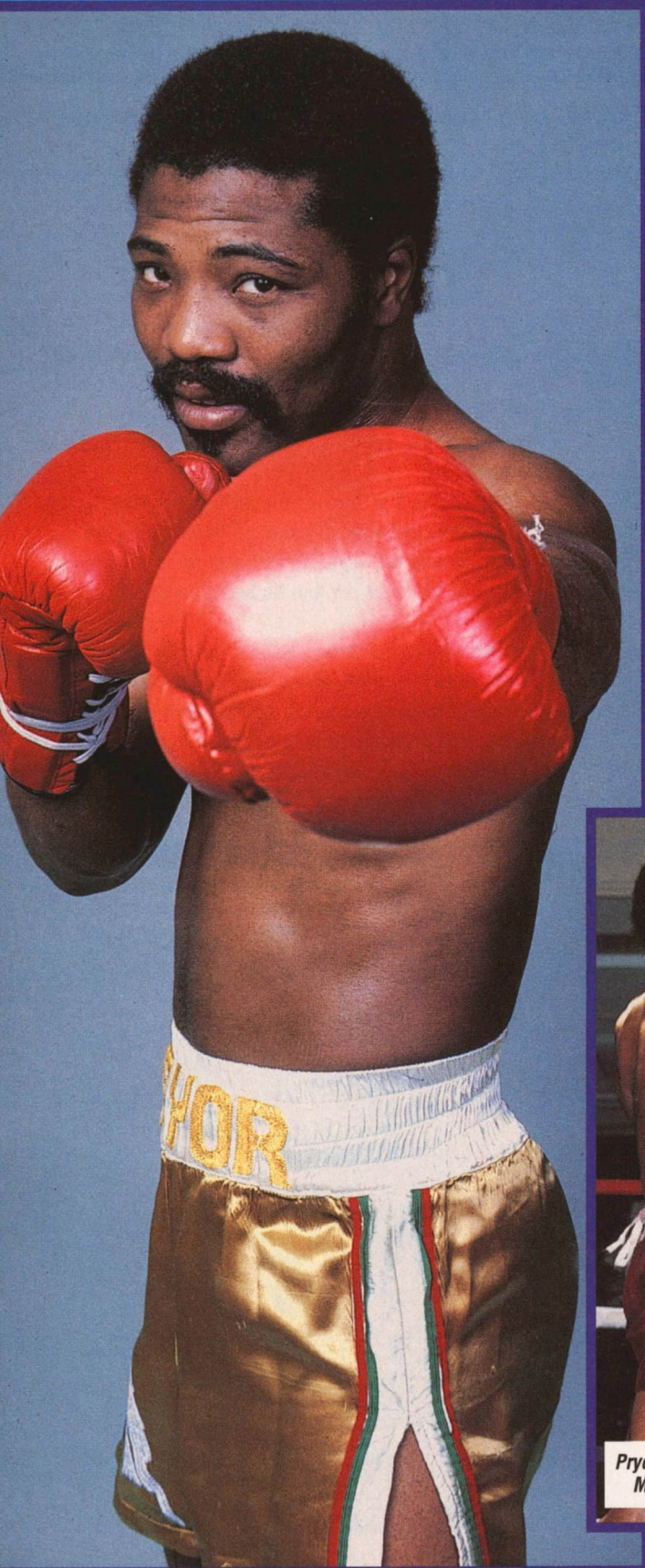
Style matchup: The 5'9" Brown fought with his hands high, behind a slight crouch, as he moved forward, looking to exchange fire. Honeyghan, almost the same height, was more of a mover, making good use of his solid jab, but he had a hustling style and liked to mix it up.

Outcome: Honeyghan outboxes Brown, mixing up his jabs, hooks, and crosses to win most of the first eight rounds. But in round nine, he gets drawn into a punch-up, and after some vicious trading, he is dumped on his back with a big left hook. From then on, Brown is all over him, closing Honeyghan's right eye with another hook and dropping him again, to force a 12th-round TKO.



Honeyghan hooks Sylvester Mitte to take Commonwealth crown

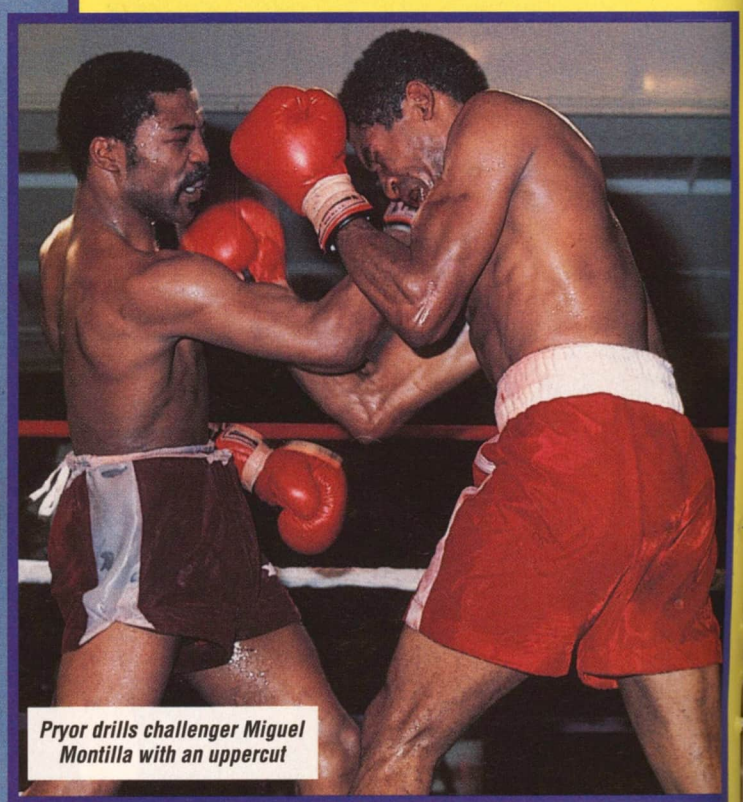
AARON PRYOR vs.



Pryor's strengths: "The Hawk" was a ferocious fighter who swamped opponents with punches, showing amazing stamina, strength, and workrate, as well as good hand speed and power (87.5 knockout percent). He had a tungsten chin, was quick on his feet, and had sharp reflexes, and his bobbing, weaving, and head movement made him hard to reach. He stopped Antonio Cervantes in four to win the WBA 140-pound title in 1980, defended it eight times—twice stopping Alexis Arguello—and then lifted the IBF title. He won his first 36 fights before finally losing when he made an ill-advised comeback.

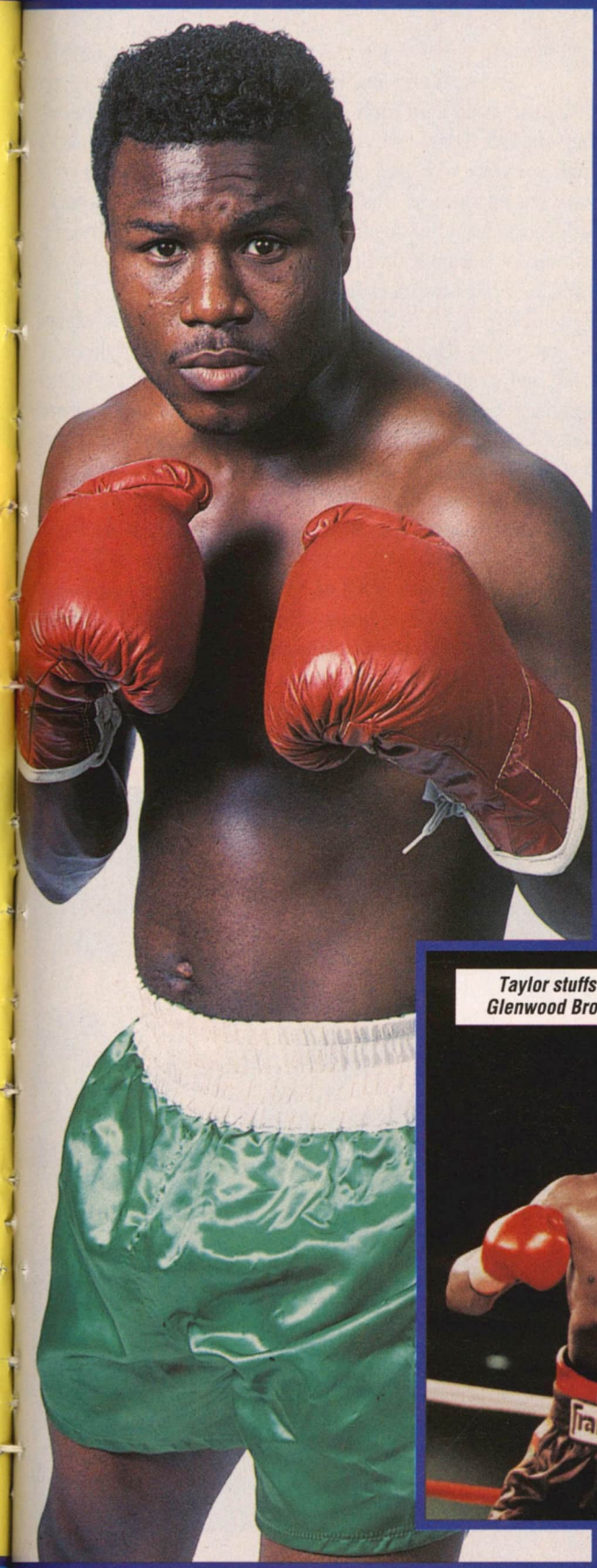
Pryor's weaknesses: He was a natural lightweight (134 pounds shortly before winning the title) and often said he would return to 135 if offered a fight with Ray Mancini. He was not a one-punch hitter, despite his stoppage ratio. Emanuel Steward, who once trained him, said Pryor did everything wrong (but got away with it because of his desire and natural ability). He was dropped by Cervantes and taken to the wire by Arguello in their first fight. His later career was blighted by drug addiction.

Taylor's strengths: No one came close to matching Taylor's speed. His punches came in lightning bunches, and he had quick feet, with fine reflexes and refined skills. After winning Olympic gold at age 17, he went undefeated in 25 fights, outboxing Buddy McGirt to lift the IBF junior welter title in



Pryor drills challenger Miguel Montilla with an uppercut

MELDRICK TAYLOR

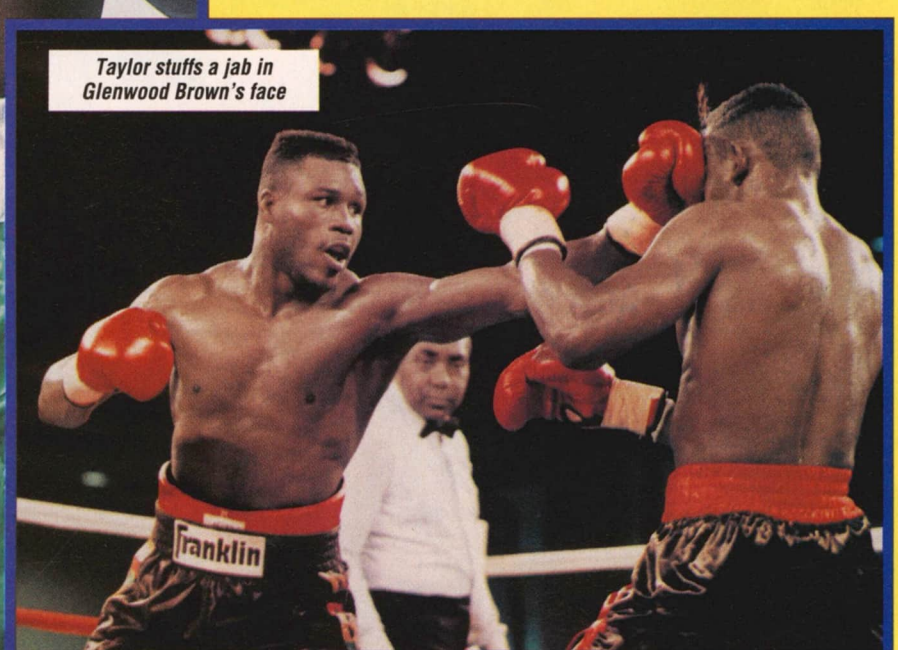


'88. Two defenses later, he fought WBC counterpart Julio Cesar Chavez and was denied victory when the fight was stopped in the final seconds with Chavez, trailing on points, unlikely to land again with only two clicks left on the clock. Taylor regrouped by outboxing Aaron Davis for the WBA welterweight title.

Taylor's weaknesses: He was not a heavy puncher and had a vulnerable chin (four stoppage defeats before the age of 30). The disappointment of being denied a career-defining victory against Chavez took something out of him. He no longer lived the dedicated boxer's life, and his excesses took their toll. In '92, he challenged against the far bigger Terry Norris for the WBC super welterweight title and was battered to defeat. He was never the same again, losing the welterweight title to Crisanto Espana in his next fight, after which he continued to slide.

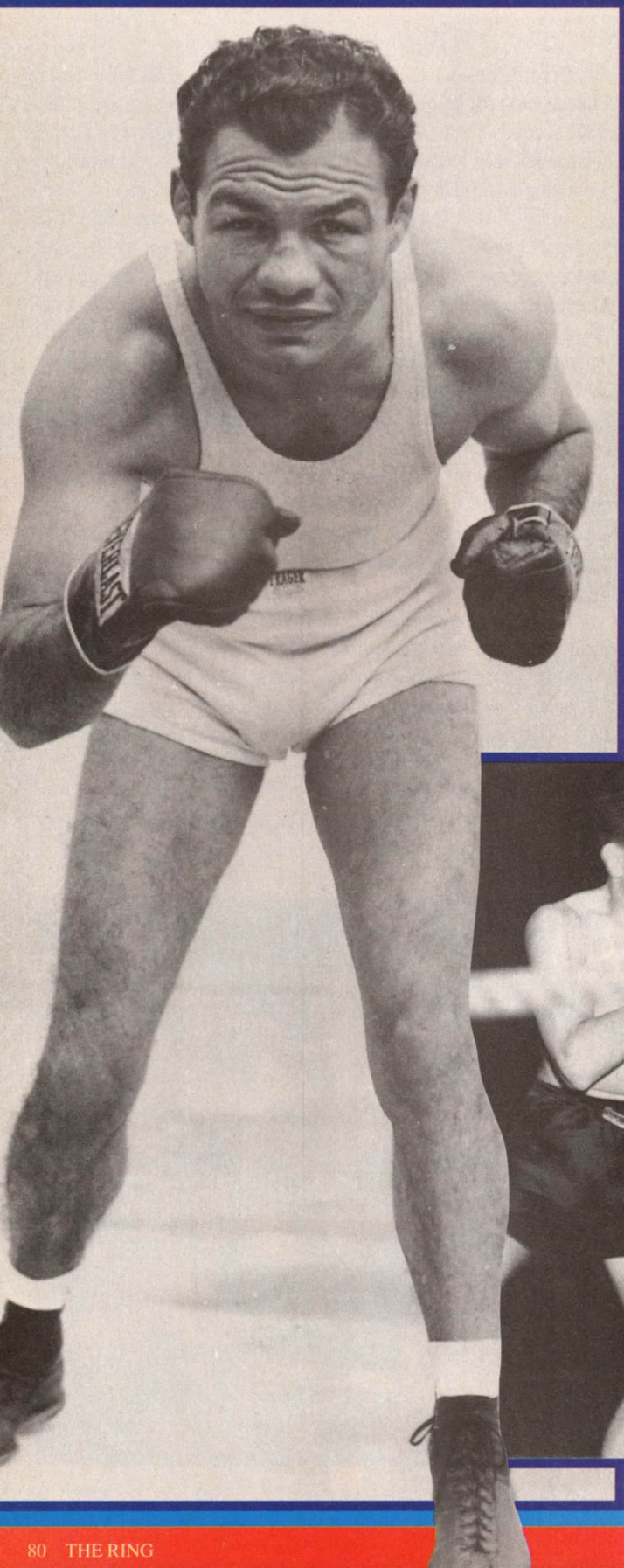
Style matchup: Taylor moved in and out extremely quickly, coming forward to throw punches in blinding clusters or boxing adroitly off the back foot. Pryor was far more aggressive, steaming forward to rake opponents with rapid-fire punches from all angles.

Outcome: The muscular 5'7" Taylor is one inch taller and, by fight time, has an eight-pound weight advantage, but he can't match Pryor's strength or power. Taylor keeps his distance, relying on his speed to pick up points. For the first time in his life, Pryor finds himself in with a boxer with quicker hands, but he continues to press forward and pound away at the body. By round 13, Taylor is still leading on points, but Pryor has slowed him down enough to hammer him, and he ends the fight in his favor with 14 unanswered punches.



Taylor stuffs a jab in Glenwood Brown's face

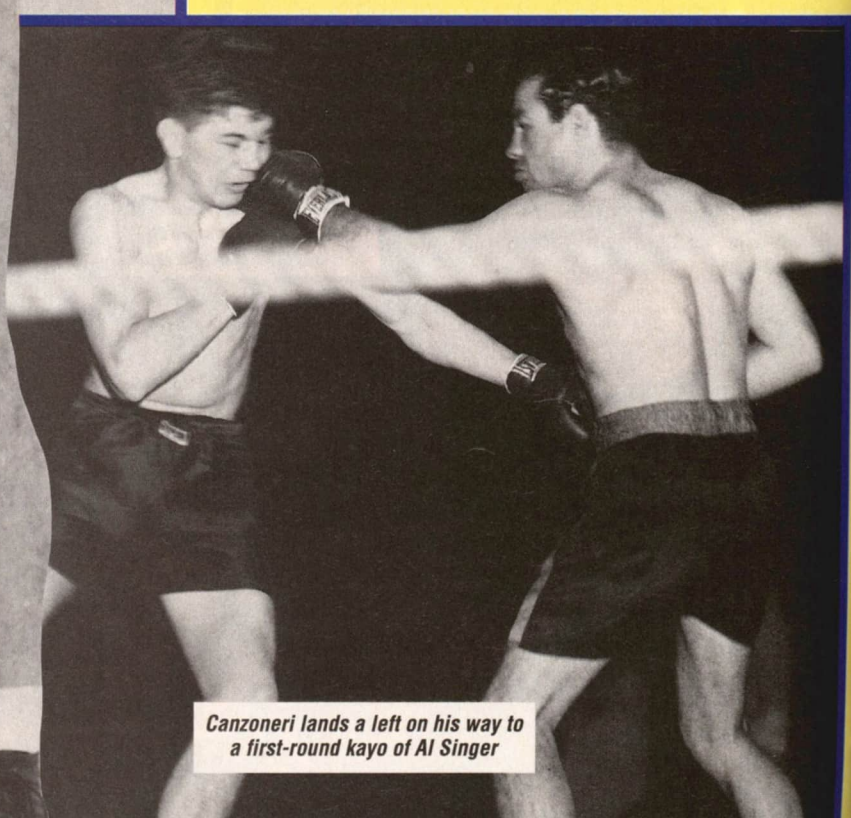
TONY CANZONERI VS



Canzoneri's strengths: He was a brilliant boxer with fast hands and feet, quick reflexes, a solid defense, and a sound chin (only one stoppage loss—in his last outing—in 175 fights). He combined persistent aggression and a high workrate with pinpoint counterpunching. Over 70 years have passed since he was rated the world's best boxer, but he still looks dazzling on film. He won the world featherweight title at 19 and both the lightweight and junior welterweight titles at 22. He beat six Hall of Famers.

Canzoneri's weaknesses: He was small for his various weight classes. He weighed 126-132 pounds at his lightweight peak, and when he beat Jackie "Kid" Berg for the junior welterweight title, both men weighed under 135 pounds. Canzoneri lost twice to Jackie Jadick and twice to Barney Ross, after which he abandoned the heavier division. He was not a great puncher, winning just two of his 18 title bouts (eight losses) inside the distance. All-in-all, he lost 24 and drew 10 out of 175.

Chavez' strengths: One of boxing's best-ever bodypunchers, he was also a clever boxer with a heavy jab, tight defensive skills, an extremely strong chin, and serious power. He had a great ability to read fights, and at his peak he overcame the sharpest boxers and the biggest hitters. After three years as WBC super featherweight titleholder, he won the WBA and



Canzoneri lands a left on his way to a first-round kayo of Al Singer

JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ

then the WBC lightweight titles, before winning the WBC and then the IBF light welterweight titles. Later, after his first official loss in 91 bouts, he regained the WBC 140-pound title. His record in title bouts was 31-4-1 (21), and for several years he was rated as pound-for-pound supremo.

Chavez' weaknesses: He had two extraneous factors in his favor: the Mexico-based WBC hierarchy and Don King. With less "luck," some of his wins and draws could easily have been losses, including those in title fights against Meldrick Taylor, Pernell Whitaker, and Frankie Randall (second fight). Later, he revealed a bad loser's petulance. He avoided a return with Whitaker and a rubber match with Randall.

Style matchup: Chavez was an attacking fighter who fought behind a high guard while using good head movement. He would slam in hard jabs and short rights while aiming heavy left hooks to the short ribs. Canzoneri was more of a mover, showing outstanding footwork as he came into range to land his combinations.

Outcome: Despite his size advantage, the 5'7" Chavez struggles to land cleanly on the quicker 5'4" Canzoneri. The Italian-American is able to pick up points with his quick jab and catches the Mexican with sharp counters. Chavez, however, works away at the body, and by the middle rounds, Canzoneri is slowing. Chavez piles on the pressure, dropping Canzoneri with a heavy left hook in round 15 to take a controversial split decision.

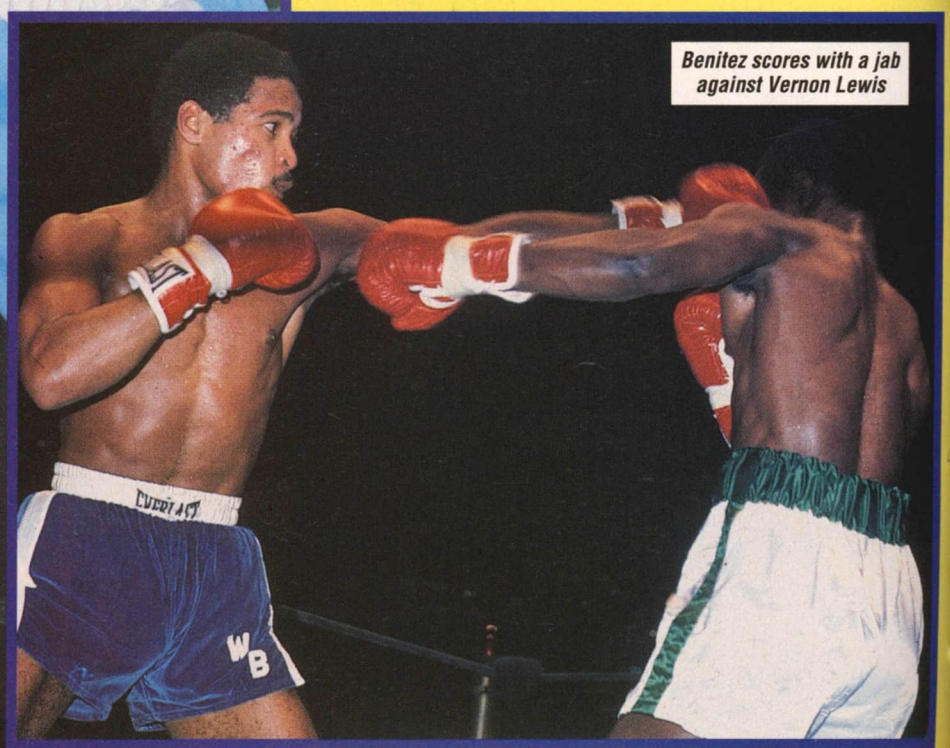
Chavez blasts Tony Lopez with a heavy hook

WILFRED BENITEZ

Benitez' strengths: He could avoid punches effortlessly, ducking, slipping, sliding out of the way, or picking them out of the air. He was a quick puncher whose timing and accuracy secured 31 knockouts in 62 pro bouts. At 17, he became the youngest-ever titleholder, beating Hall of Famer Antonio Cervantes for the WBA junior welterweight title. At 20, he outboxed Carlos Palomino for the WBC welterweight title, and at 22, he knocked out Maurice Hope for the WBC super welter belt. In all, he made six successful title defenses, including a one-sided decision over Roberto Duran 1982.

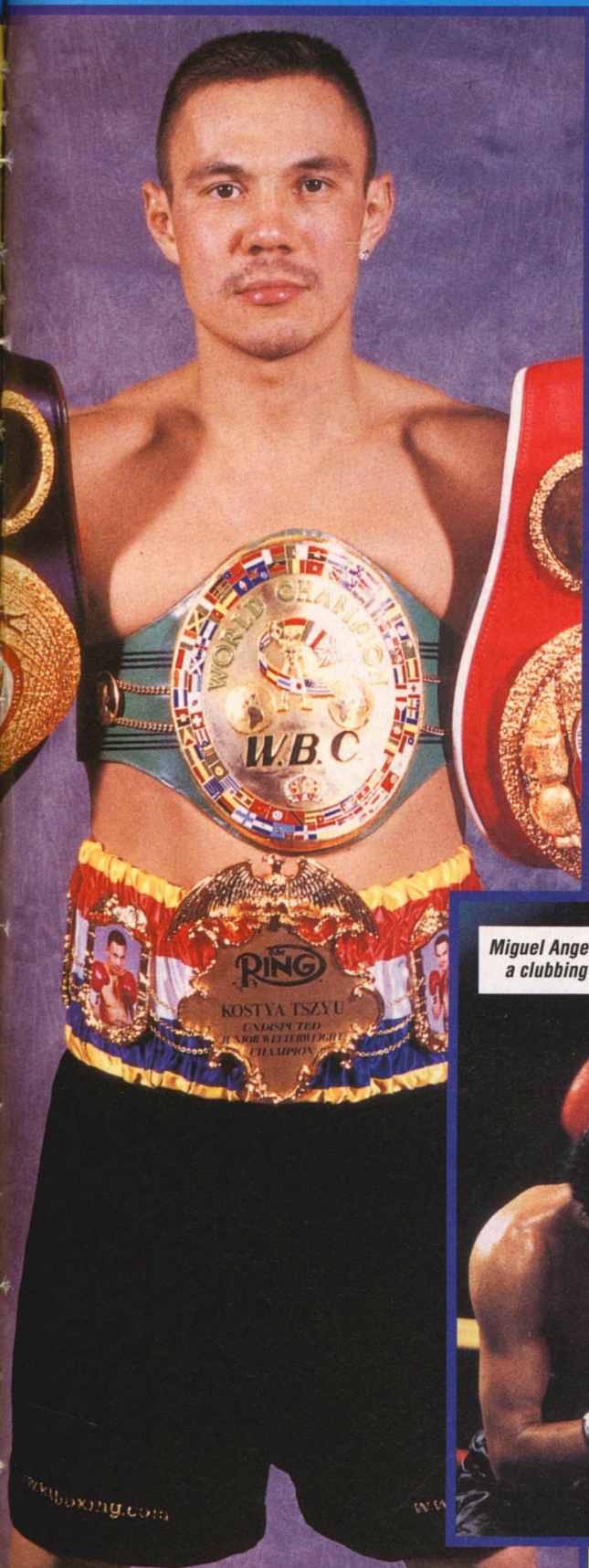
Benitez' weaknesses: He neglected training and was seldom in peak shape, which contributed to weight problems and his lack of strength and durability (stopped four times, dropped by a Ray Leonard jab). He was erratic, brilliant one day, mediocre the next. In non-title bouts as a junior welter titlist, he was held to a draw by Harold Weston and was the beneficiary of a split decision robbery against Bruce Curry. Leonard's power and speed proved decisive, and he was also edged out by Thomas Hearns' size and skill. Lost seven of his last 16 fights.

Tszyu's strengths: A heavy-handed, extremely strong junior welter who throws straight, hard, accurate blows, he breaks opponents with his body attack or flattens them with well-timed bombs to the head (24 stoppages in 32 fights). He's also a talented defensive boxer, excellent at blocking and parrying. He won the IBF title in his 14th bout and defended it five



Benitez scores with a jab against Vernon Lewis

vs. KOSTYA TSZYU



times. He later won the WBC title and unified by winning the WBA and IBF versions. He stopped speedy boxers like Zab Judah and Sharmba Mitchell and outboxed big hitters like Ben Tackie and a faded Julio Cesar Chavez. Tszyu has lost only once in 32 fights, 15 of them for world titles and 13 of them against world titleholders.

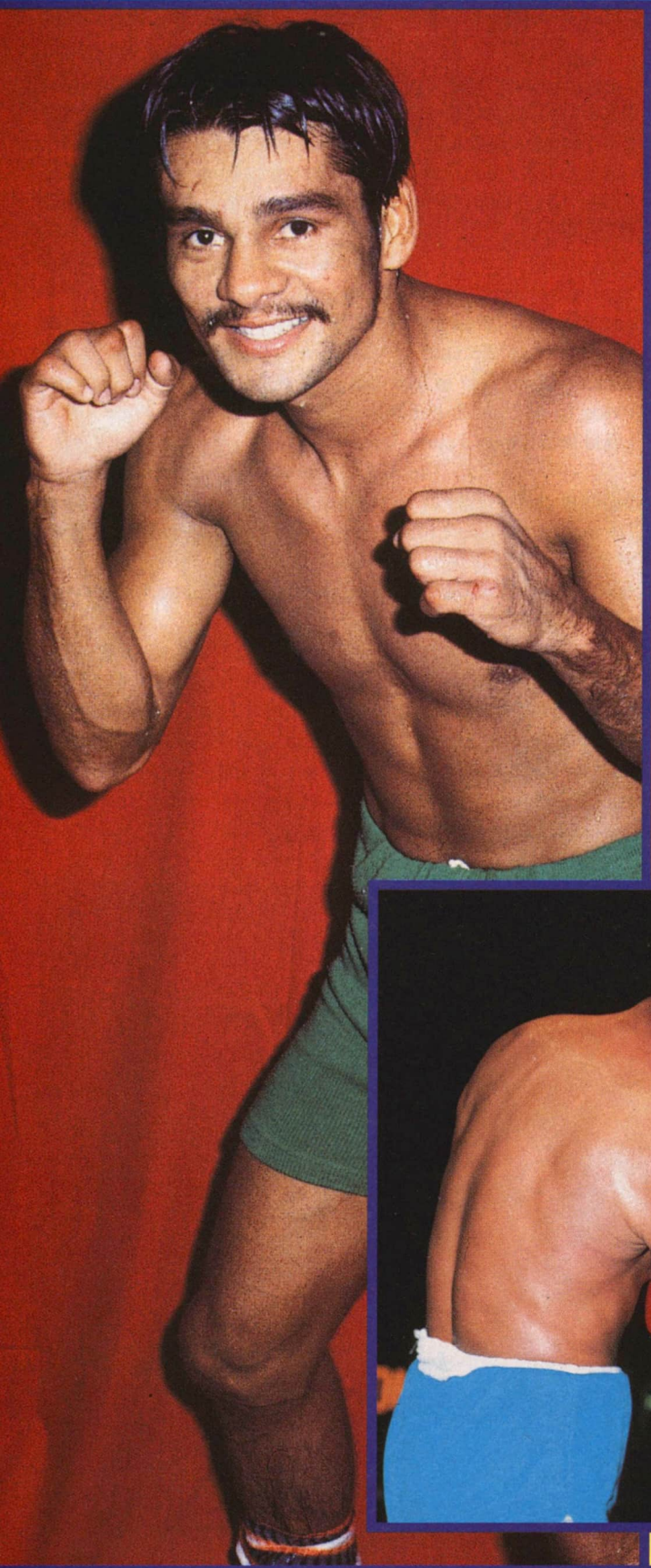
Tszyu's weaknesses: He stands upright and seldom moves his head and is therefore vulnerable to quick-handed boxers, as Judah and Mitchell briefly proved. He was stopped in 10 by Vince Phillips, partly because he was open to the right cross and partly because of fighting in less than peak shape. He was also dropped twice by the quick-punching Diobelys Hurtado, while Oktay Urkal held him to a close decision.

Style matchup: The 5'10" Benitez had a relaxed style, his hands at chest height as he glided around throwing quick punches. He was also effective off the ropes, where his reflexes got him out of trouble. The 5'6" Tszyu stands erect with gloves high and a wide-legged stance. He prefers the middle range, firing stiff, straight punches to head and body.

Outcome: Benitez uses his height and speed to land quick, long punches and he also has success on the ropes. He drops Tszyu for a short count with a quick right in round three. Meanwhile, the stronger Russian misses a lot, but the few that land are hurtful. By round 14, his better conditioning is closing the gap. Tszyu lands two hooks to the ribs and a short right to the chin, and Benitez is down for the count.

Miguel Angel Gonzalez absorbs a clubbing right from Tszyu

ROBERTO DURAN VS



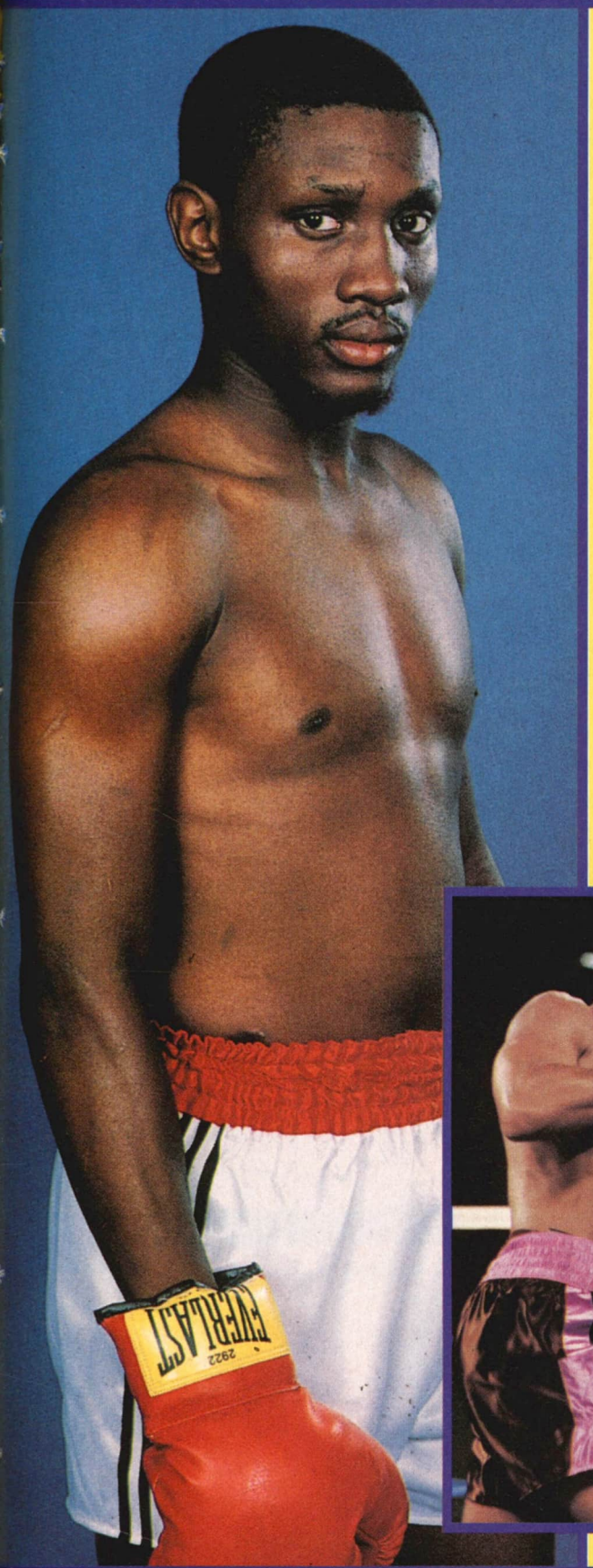
Duran's strengths: "Hands Of Stone" combined crippling power in his right cross and left hook (52 knockouts in 65 bouts before abandoning the lightweight division) with immense strength and aggression. He was a fine boxer who moved his head to slip punches and had a hard chin and a tough hide. He won the lightweight title at age 21 by stopping Ken Buchanan and defended it 12 times before outfighting Ray Leonard for the WBC welterweight title. As Leonard put it: "I never realized he was so quick or that he punched so hard. He was a masterful boxer—very smart." Duran later won the WBA 154-pound title and WBC 160-pound title. He won 73 of his first 74 fights.

Duran's weaknesses: He could be troubled by skill and speed. Ray Lampkin outjabbed him for 13 rounds, Esteban DeJesus dropped him and outpointed him (and dropped him again in their first return). A dancing Leonard made him quit, while the slippery Wilfred Benitez and the quick-moving Kirkland Laing soundly outpointed him, and Thomas Hearns destroyed him with speed and power. Duran's inconsistent commitment to training contributed to several of the 16 losses on his 120-fight record. He was a dirty fighter who could have been disqualified for his low blow against Buchanan.

Whitaker's strengths: One of boxing's finest defensive wizards, "Sweet Pea" was an extraordinary innovator, inventing moves never seen before, with a multi-layered defense to complement his phenomenal reflexes, dazzling hand speed, and

Duran bends the rules against Monroe Brooks

PERNELL WHITAKER

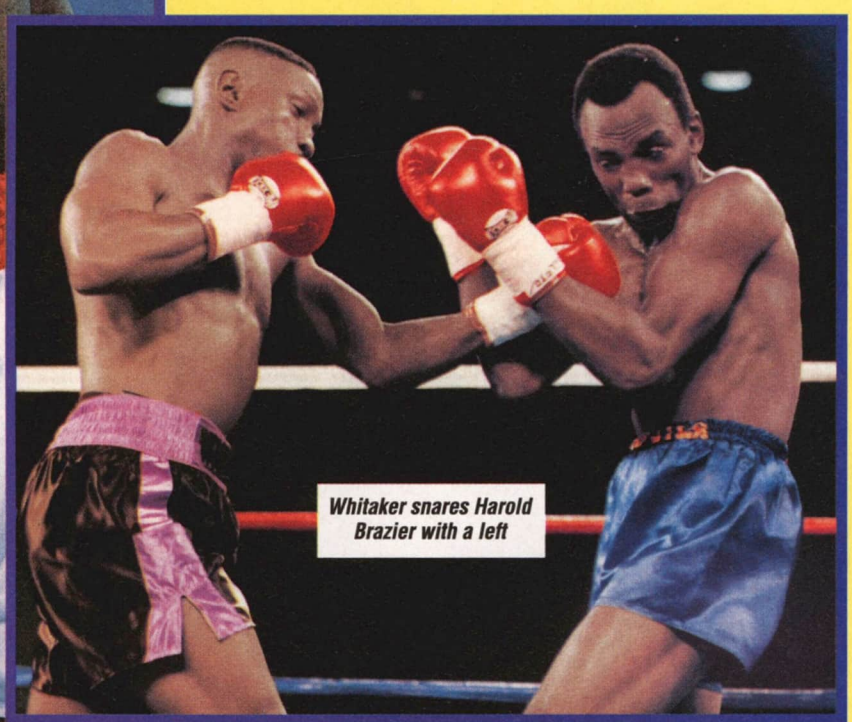


solid chin. He was a victim of two outrageous decisions and one questionable one, but was never decisively beaten until losing on points to Felix Trinidad at the age of 35. He unified the lightweight title on his way to eight defenses, and won the IBF junior welterweight title, the WBC welterweight title (eight defenses), and the WBA junior middleweight title. He outboxed 15 titleholders, including Azumah Nelson, Buddy McGirt, Julio Cesar Chavez, and Julio Cesar Vasquez.

Whitaker's weaknesses: Despite the occasional one-punch knockout, he was not a huge puncher (17 stoppages in 46 fights—37 percent), and his tricky style and occasional tendency to clown or showboat gave excuses to biased judges. His lifestyle between fights—particularly his cocaine use—exacerbated his decline.

Style matchup: The 5'7" Duran steamed forward, slipping punches to land big hooks and crosses—frequently targeting the body. He liked to do damage on the inside, but could also box behind the jab. The 5'6" Whitaker, a switch-hitting southpaw, was comfortable at any range—sharp combinations from the outside or body blows up close.

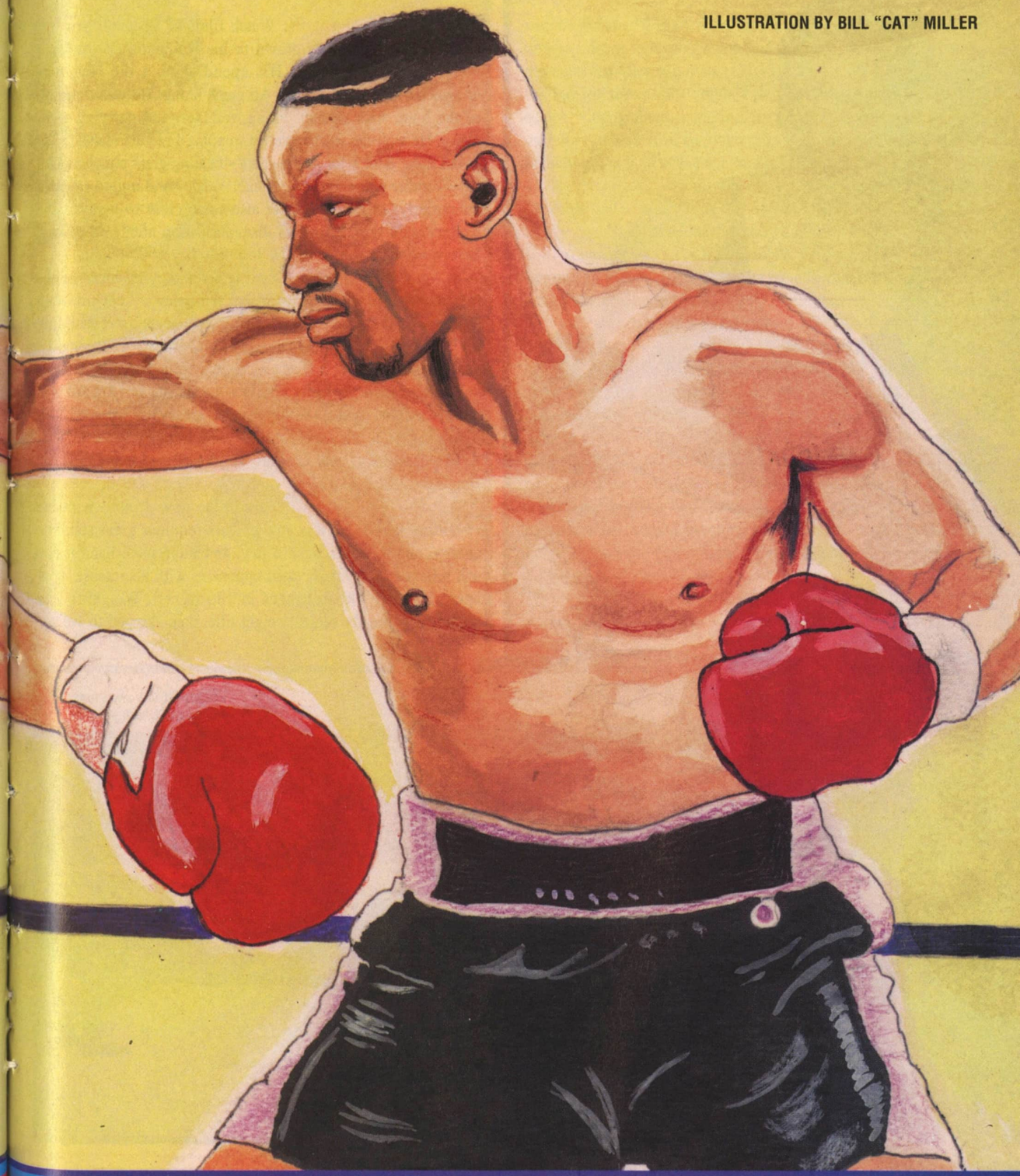
Outcome: After tasting Duran's hooks and thumbs, Whitaker reverts to the long-range style he used to beat Nelson. His movement frustrates the Panamanian, who loses a point for low blows. Whitaker is landing more punches, but Duran's are much harder. In round 13, Duran slips a right lead and cracks home a knockdown-inducing right cross, but Whitaker gets up, dances out of trouble, and goes on to win via split decision.



Whitaker snares Harold Brazier with a left

ROBERTO DURAN vs. PERNELL WHITAKER

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER

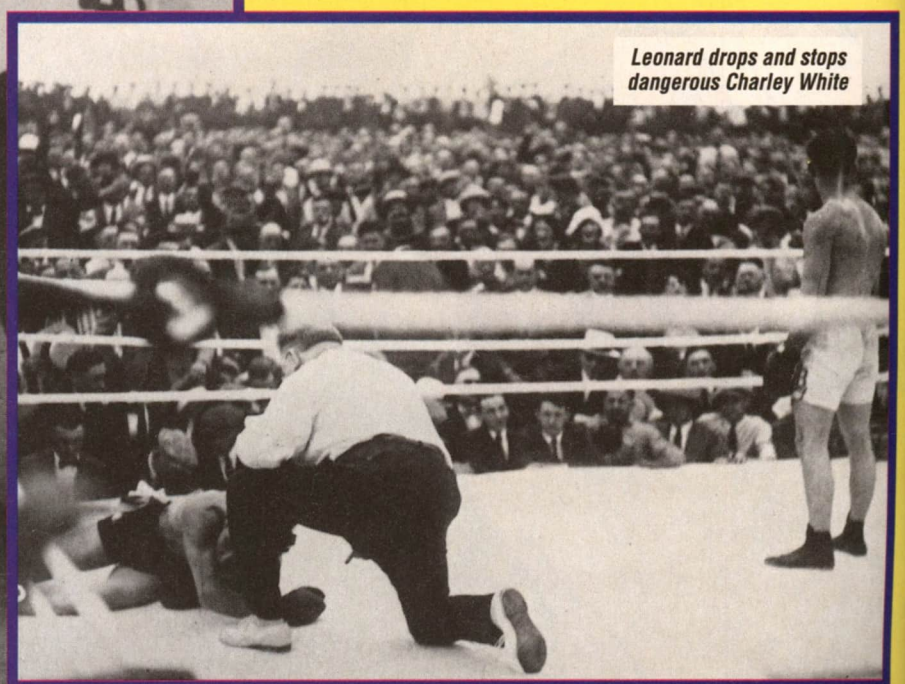


BENNY LEONARD vs.

Leonard's strengths: Watch films of Leonard, and you are immediately drawn to his brilliant footwork and mesmerizing jab. His speed around the ring was unequalled until Muhammad Ali came along. He was a master of the feint, with perfect timing, reflexes, and parrying technique. He won the world title by stopping Freddie Welsh in his 110th fight, held it for seven years—beating great punchers like Lew Tendler and great boxers like Welsh—and retired (at least temporarily) as champion. He also came close to winning the welterweight title, losing on disqualification after hitting Jack Britton when he was down. He lost only five of 210 fights.

Leonard's weaknesses: Boxing technique advanced in the two decades between Leonard and Armstrong. Leonard, with his lean-back stance, never came across anything resembling the whirlwind in-fighting of "Hurricane Hank." In Leonard's time, close-quarters combat was mainly restricted to clinching, and combination punching was new to the scene. Leonard was not particularly strong, did not have a great chin (stopped four times and often dropped or dazed), and despite some spectacular knockouts, was not quite the banger that legend suggests (69 stoppages—32.9 percent).

Armstrong's strengths: He broke new ground with his swarming, close-quarters attack. This required great stamina, energy, and strength, a solid jaw, and impressive hand speed and reflexes. He overwhelmed opponents with his intense, nonstop pressure (100 stoppages in 180 fights). Weighing 124 pounds, he won the featherweight title, then skipped to welter-



Leonard drops and stops dangerous Charley White

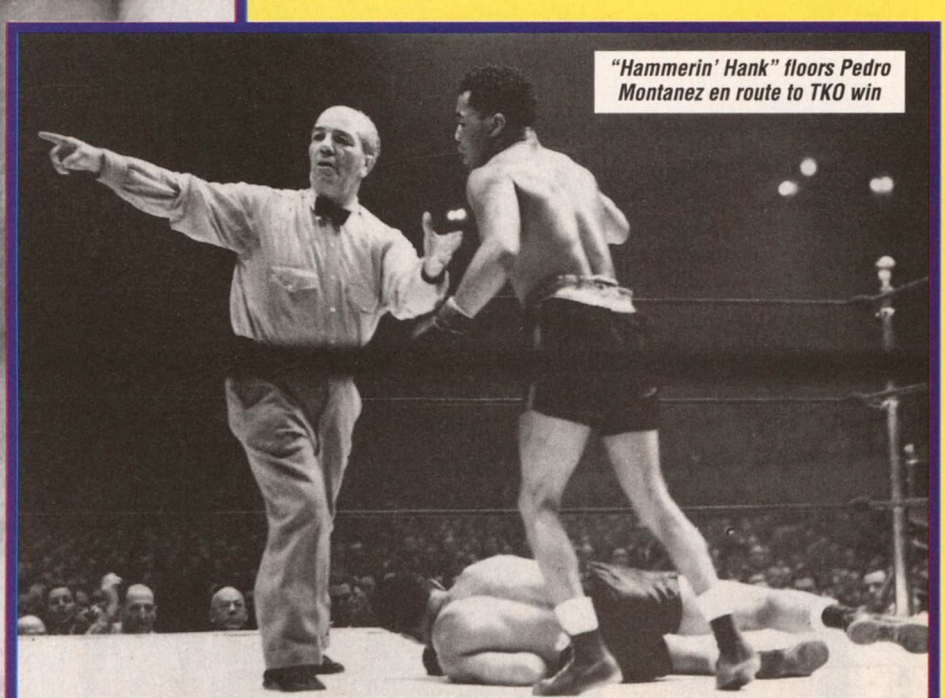
HENRY ARMSTRONG

weight to batter Barney Ross for the title (defending it 20 times), dropped down to beat Lou Ambers for the lightweight title (holding the three titles simultaneously), and got robbed with a draw in his bid for the middleweight title. He was unlucky to lose the return with Ambers (penalized five rounds for low blows), his only loss in a spell of 61 fights. He beat seven world champions, including five Hall of Fame entrants.

Armstrong's weaknesses: He was always within range and therefore had to take plenty of punches. This meant he burned out by the age of 28. Even at his peak, a mix of strength, speed, and skill occasionally gave him trouble, as Ambers twice proved. Armstrong was a dirty fighter, and once he moved beyond featherweight, he was not an especially heavy hitter.

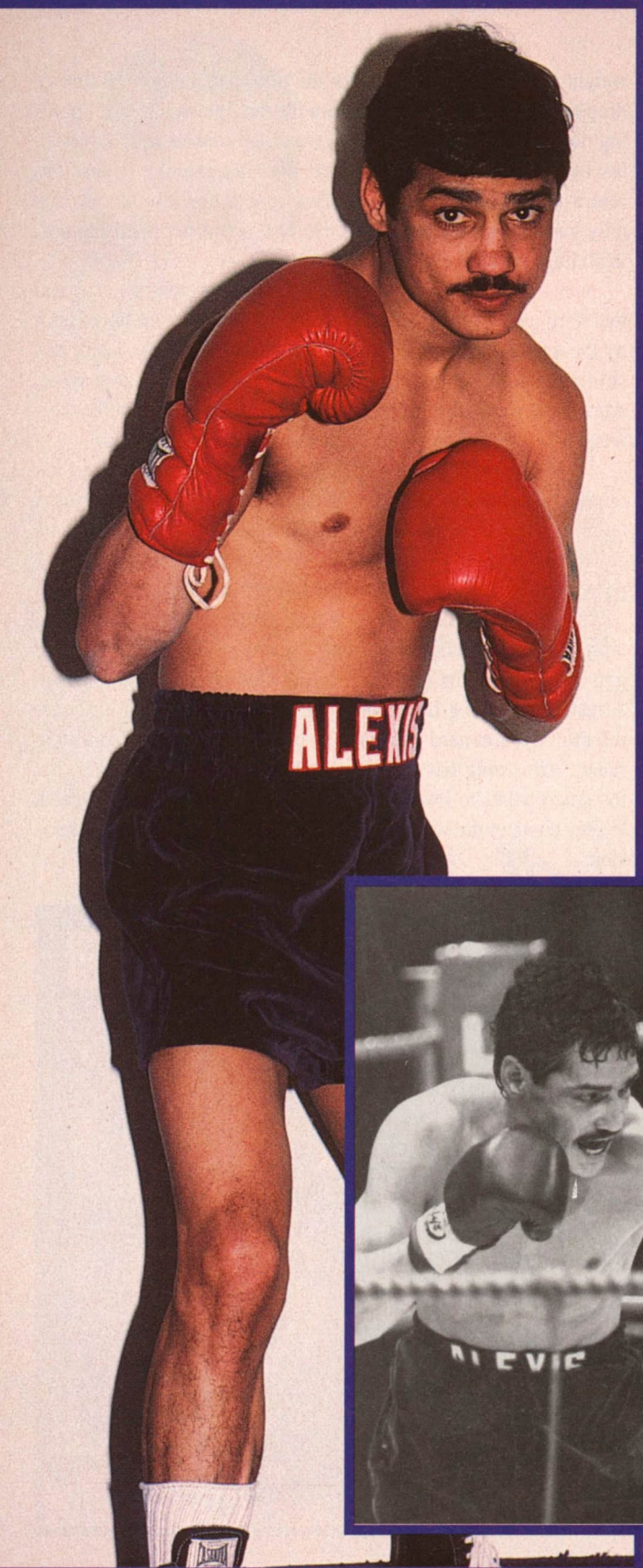
Style matchup: The erect, head-high Leonard circled his opponents, shooting out his jab, feinting, and then throwing a quick right cross before moving out of range again. The crouching Armstrong stuck close to an opponent's chest, subjecting him to a perpetual wave of leather. Both men were 5'5".

Outcome: Leonard dances at long range, spearing Armstrong with jabs and combinations, but Armstrong closes the gap and gets to work on the body and head. This becomes the pattern: Armstrong trapping Leonard on the ropes and working him over relentlessly; Leonard escaping to pepper Armstrong from long range. Armstrong has a higher workrate and is far stronger, but loses two points to low blows and is troubled by Leonard's speed. It goes down to the wire, with Armstrong winning a majority decision.



"Hammerin' Hank" floors Pedro Montanez en route to TKO win

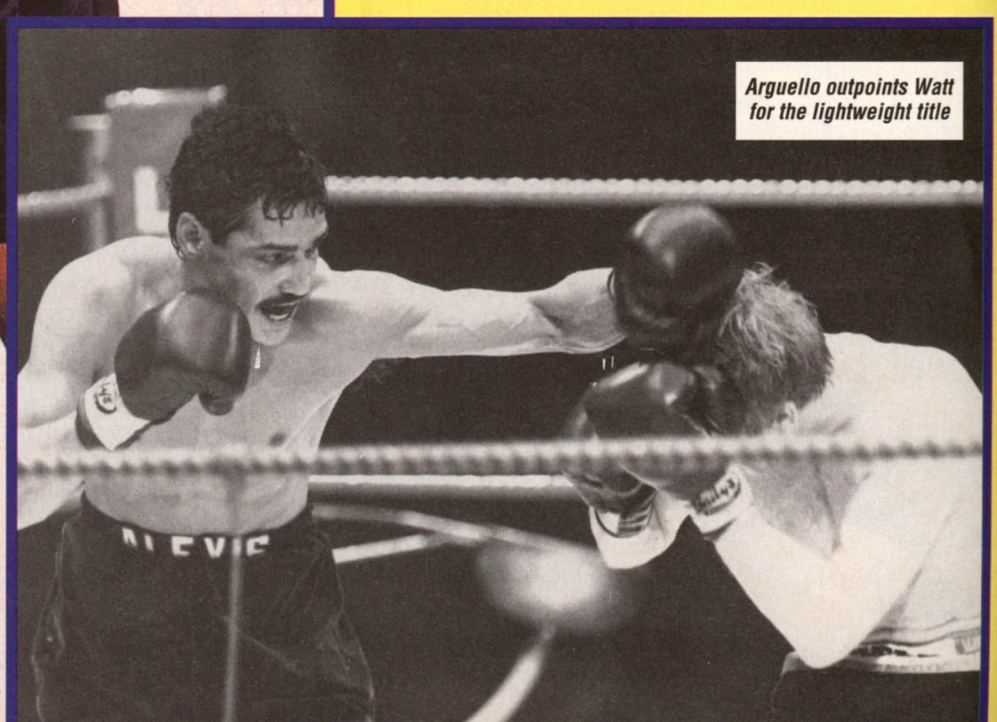
ALEXIS ARGUELLO



Arguello's strengths: A tall, heavy-handed, hard-jabbing boxer-fighter, his punches carried great leverage, whether to head or body (64 stoppages—72.7 percent). He had the strength and defensive skill to excel in four divisions, reigning as champion in three. He knocked out Ruben Olivares to win the WBA featherweight title in 1974, and defended it four times before stopping Alfredo Escalera for the WBC super featherweight title and defending it eight times. He moved to lightweight, outboxing Jim Watt for the WBC title, which he defended four times before losing two wars with Aaron Pryor for the junior welterweight title. In all, he won 19 of his 22 title bouts, beating 10 titlists, including jab-and-move boxers like Watt and brawlers like Ray Mancini.

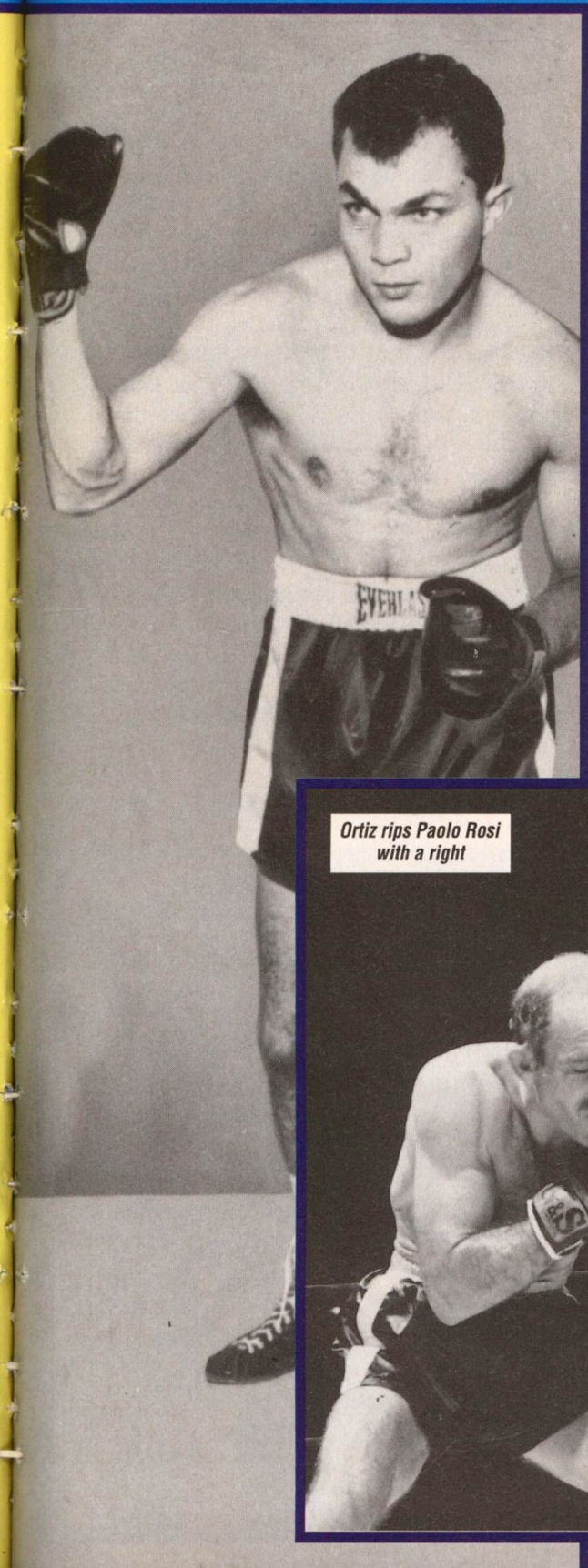
Arguello's weaknesses: The Nicaraguan lacked speed, particularly of foot. He could be troubled by exceptional quickness—an asset of most of the men who accounted for his eight losses in 88 fights (even in his peak years—from Ernesto Marcel in '74 to Pryor in '82 and '83). His chin was sound, but not rock-like, and he was stopped four times.

Ortiz' strengths: A strong lightweight with a fast jab and a hard, accurate right cross, he was also an excellent bodypuncher, had a sound chin, and was good at cutting off the ring. He could box off the back foot and was an effective in-fighter. Following a spell as junior welterweight champion, Ortiz outpointed Joe Brown for the lightweight title. After four defenses, he lost a majority decision to Ismael Laguna, but regained the



Arguello outpoints Watt for the lightweight title

VS. CARLOS ORTIZ

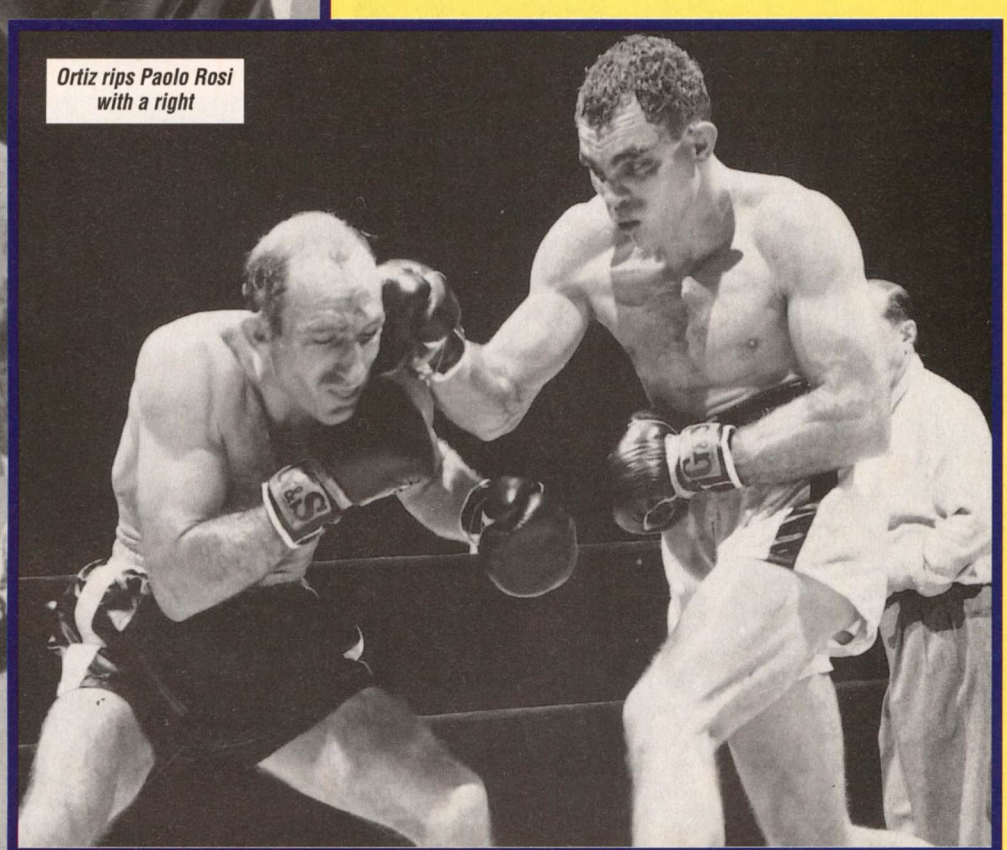


title and made five more defenses. He beat four Hall of Fame members—Brown, Laguna (twice), Flash Elorde (twice), and Sugar Ramos (twice). Four of his seven losses (in 70 fights) came via split or majority decisions.

Ortiz' weaknesses: The New York-based Puerto Rican could be out-finessed. For instance, Johnny Busso, a fast, canny stylist, used his skill to outpoint him in 1958, Laguna used his jab and quick combinations to outpoint him in '65, and in '72, the elegant Ken Buchanan became the only man to stop Ortiz. Ortiz (who managed 30 stoppages—42.9 percent) did not have anything like Arguello's devastating power, and he was not always in peak shape (lax training contributed to his title loss against Laguna).

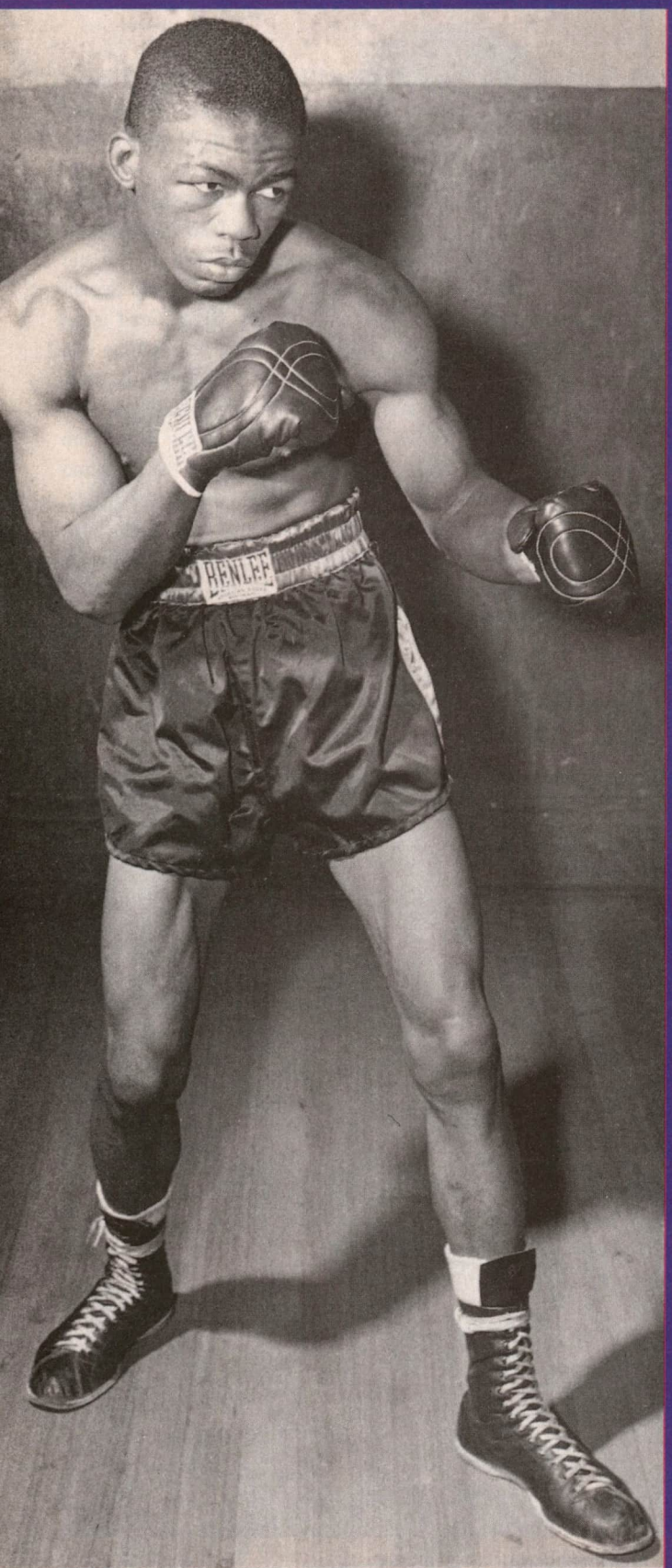
Style matchup: The 5'7" Ortiz was an attacking boxer who moved in behind his sharp jab and banged away to the head and body, pressuring opponents and outworking them on the inside. The 5'10" Arguello economized on movement, picking his hard, accurate punches with care and always looking for the knockout.

Outcome: Ortiz is the busier, quicker boxer, flashing out his jab and landing sharp right crosses, but Arguello can match his strength, and the Nicaraguan's punches carry more beef. It's a close fight, but in the last round, Arguello hurts Ortiz with a hook to the ribs and drops him with a right. Ortiz is up quickly, but the unanimous decision goes to Arguello.



Ortiz rips Paolo Rosi with a right

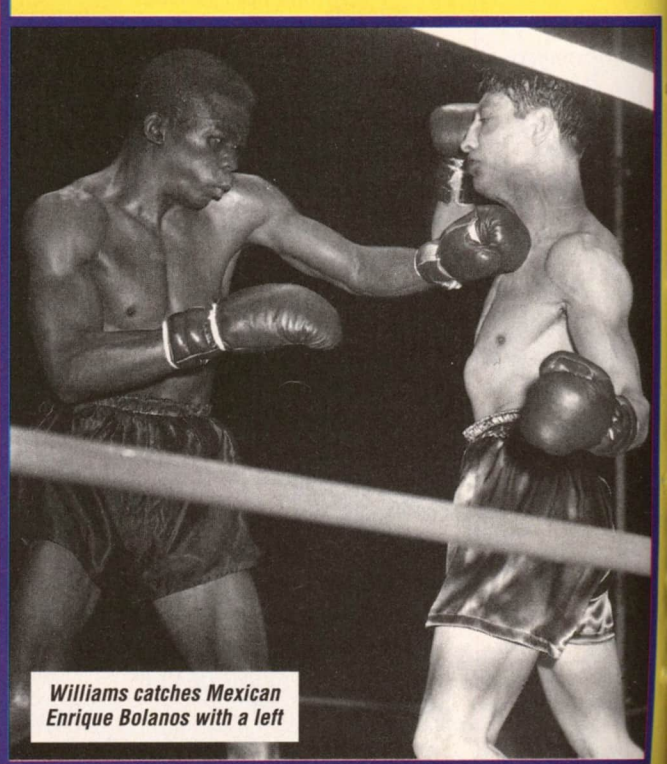
IKE WILLIAMS VS



Williams' strengths: A big, heavy-handed lightweight who regularly beat welterweights, he had tremendous innate athletic ability, a smooth style, and quick reflexes. He was a well-schooled counterpuncher with a snappy jab, a great uppercut, and good power in both hands (60 knockouts total, seven of his nine lightweight title wins ending early). Williams won the NBA version of the title at 22 in his 72nd bout and unified the title in his 96th bout, making eight defenses in a combined reign that lasted six years. One exceptional run of 20 straight wins included victories over lightweight champions Bob Montgomery and Beau Jack and welterweight champions Kid Gavilan and Johnny Bratton.

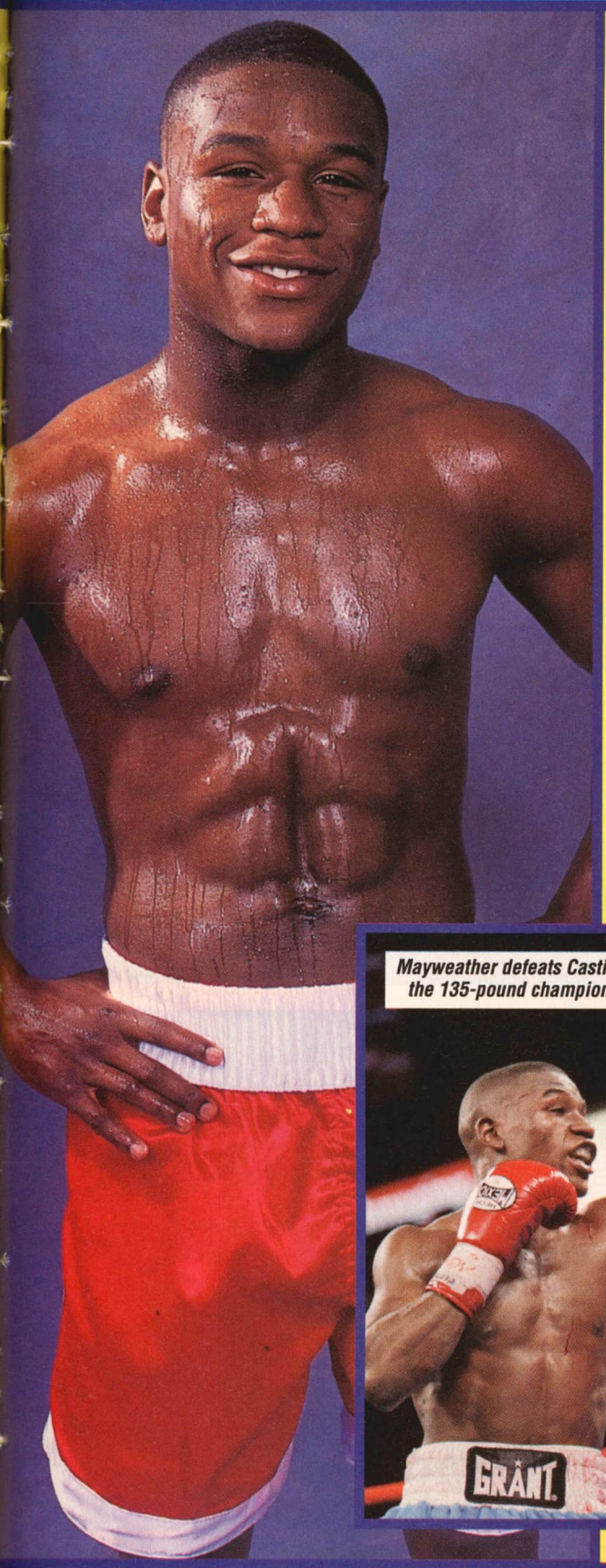
Williams' weaknesses: He averaged 13 fights a year in his first professional decade, but started to burn out at age 27. He lost a total of 24 fights (although mostly at welterweight, several on disputed decisions, half in the final third of his career). He was stopped four times—once by clean knockout. His career was dogged by rumors that he threw key fights after he signed up with mobster Blinky Palermo. He later testified to the U.S. Senate that he'd been offered bribes to throw fights against Gavilan (their second) and Jimmy Carter—both of which he lost, although he said he'd refused the bribes.

Mayweather's strengths: One of the fastest-ever lightweights, Mayweather is a defensive master, with blinding hand speed and near-perfect timing (20 stoppages in 30 fights, all



Williams catches Mexican Enrique Bolanos with a left

FLOYD MAYWEATHER

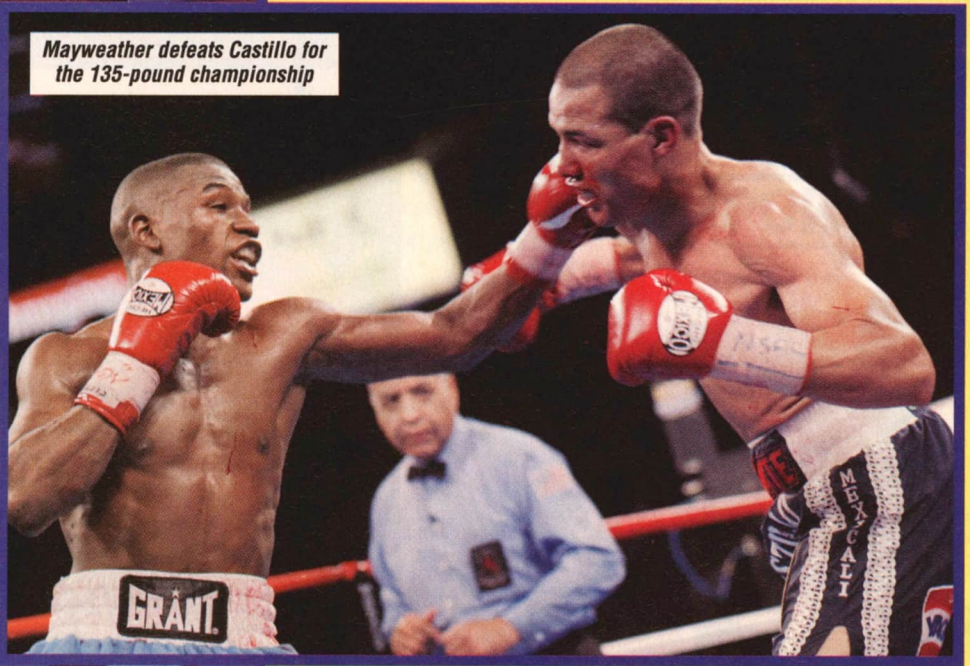


wins). An exceptional long-range boxer, he's also a master at fighting off the ropes. He won the WBC super featherweight title at 21 and defended it eight times, including wins over three world titleholders. He moved up to outpoint Jose Luis Castillo for the WBC lightweight title and has made two defenses. He's beaten rangy punchers like Diego Corrales, brawlers like Jesus Chavez and Castillo, and slick boxers like Genaro Hernandez. He has never been dropped by a punch from an opponent.

Mayweather's weaknesses: He has not carried his power up to lightweight, with none of his three title fights ending inside the distance. Many felt Castillo deserved to win their first fight, when Mayweather was outhustled and outpunched for long stretches. His current lack of knockout power may be due to his extremely fragile hands.

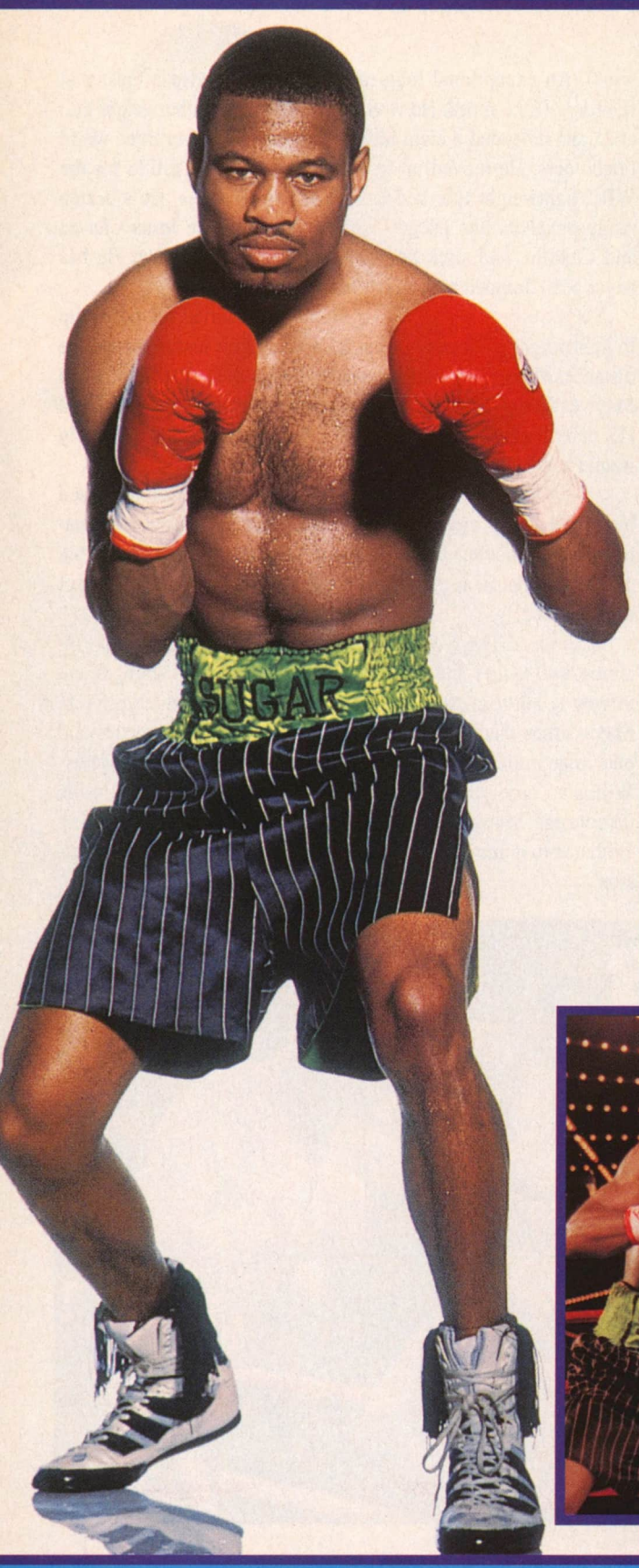
Style matchup: Williams was an aggressive boxer who used his heavy jab to create openings and threw rapid-fire combinations, while moving his head to slip punches. Mayweather often circles opponents, spearing them with the jab, but he is also adept at in-fighting.

Outcome: The 5'9½" Williams has a height advantage of almost two inches and looks far bigger. His edge in strength and power is soon apparent. But the quicker and more elusive Mayweather shades the early rounds with hit-and-run tactics and puts in an impressive flurry when trapped on the ropes. However, Williams' hard jab, bodypunching, and uppercuts on the inside discourage Mayweather, whose work rate declines, allowing Williams to dominate the later rounds and earn a unanimous decision.



Mayweather defeats Castillo for the 135-pound championship

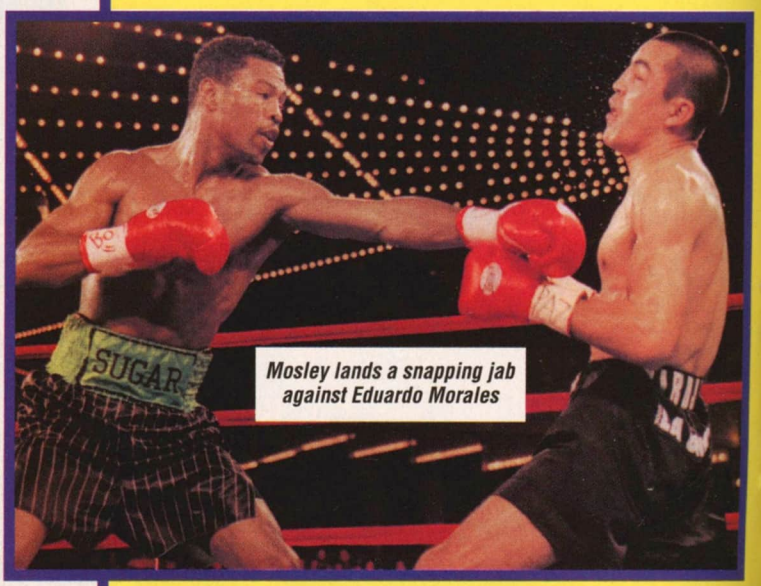
SHANE MOSLEY VS



Mosley's strengths: This huge lightweight seemed to have it all: phenomenal speed of hand and foot, serious power in both fists (30 stoppages in 32 fights before departing the lightweight division), an impressively varied attack (with bodypunching his specialty), a hard-to-penetrate defense, a decent chin (never dropped at lightweight), and great strength. He won all eight of his IBF title defenses inside the distance before beating Oscar De La Hoya for the WBC welterweight title and winning his three successful defenses at 147 pounds inside the distance.

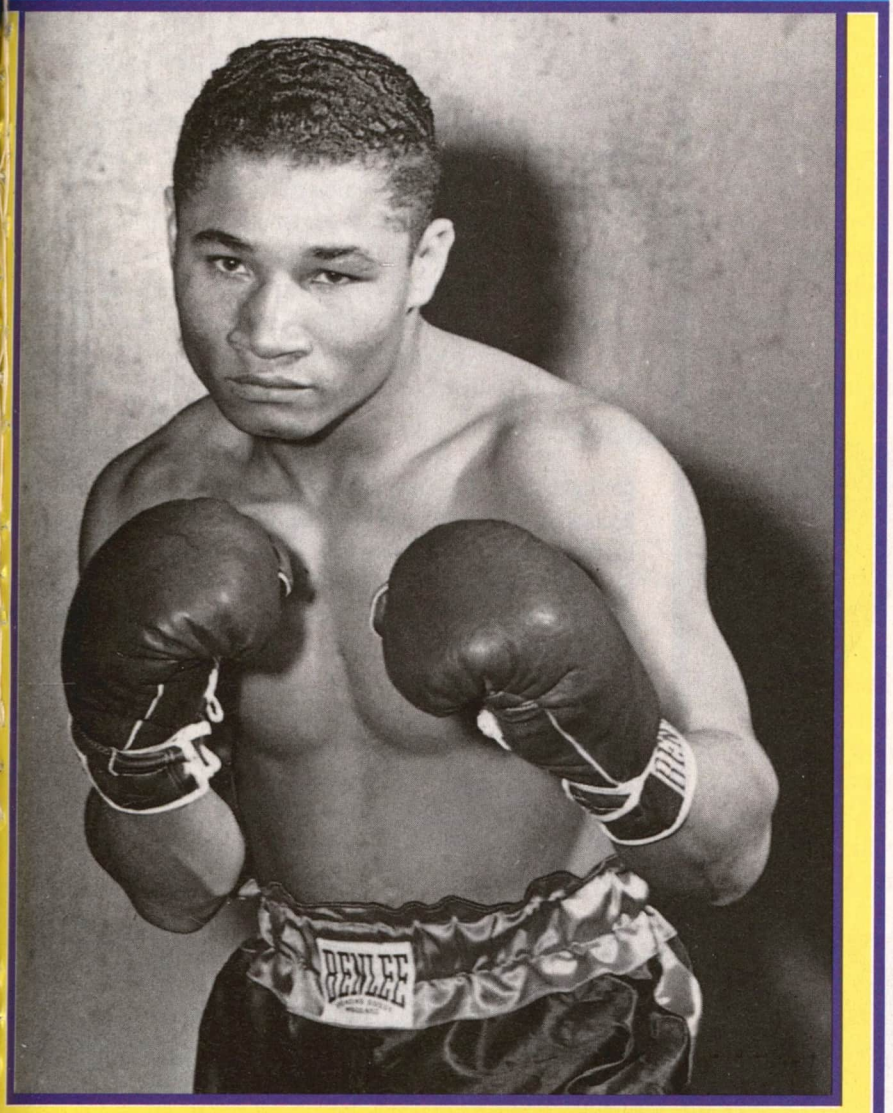
Mosley's weaknesses: He was really a welterweight who had to dehydrate to make 135 pounds. This would have been significantly harder in Jack's era, with its same-day weigh-ins. His old amateur conqueror, Vernon Forrest, who twice outpointed Sugar Shane at welterweight, illustrated that Mosley's speed could be offset by a combination of height, a long, hard jab, and plenty of clinching. As dominant as he was at lightweight, it must be noted that Mosley's challengers were all of the good-but-not-great variety.

Jack's strengths: One of the most popular fighters of the 1950s, the powerfully built Jack was a swarming brawler who threw a high volume of punches—particularly his big right cross or hooks from close range. He was muscular and strong and had a reputation for durability. At 21, he beat Tippy Larkin for the New York version of the world title, as part of a 16-fight winning streak that also saw him beat Fritzie Zivic (twice) and Henry Armstrong. He lost, regained, and lost his title to Hall of Fame entrant Bob Montgomery. He then had another great spurt, beating three lightweight champions—Montgomery, Juan Zurita, and Sammy Angott—but his progress was interrupted by war service. He later beat two welterweight champions, Johnny Bratton and Lew Jenkins.



Mosley lands a snapping jab against Eduardo Morales

BEAU JACK



Jack's weaknesses: He was easy to hit with his charge-forward style, which meant he took a lot of punishment. By 25, after 70 fights, he began to slide. Ike Williams beat him three times, stopping him once. He could be outboxed, as happened fairly frequently—losing 24 of his 113 fights (although 14 of those losses occurred after the war, when he was past his peak). He was not as big a puncher as his reputation suggests, winning just 40 fights (35.4 percent) inside the distance.

Style matchup: The broad-shouldered, deep-chested 5'6" Jack knew just one way to fight: He would charge forward from his pronounced crouch, using his strength to get close while throwing barrages of punches in a mission to stop or wear down opponents. The 5'8" Mosley is a switch-hitting, sharp-shooting boxer-puncher, who throws lightning combinations from the outside or heavy bodypunches on the inside.

Outcome: Aware of Mosley's weight troubles, Jack sets a frenetic pace, piling in with a non-stop tattoo of punches, but Mosley catches him with uppercuts as he comes in, slides out of the way, and bangs him to the body. Jack is throwing far more leather, but Mosley is connecting more, and gradually Jack's resistance begins to fade. In round 10, he batters Jack with 16 hard punches to end the fight.

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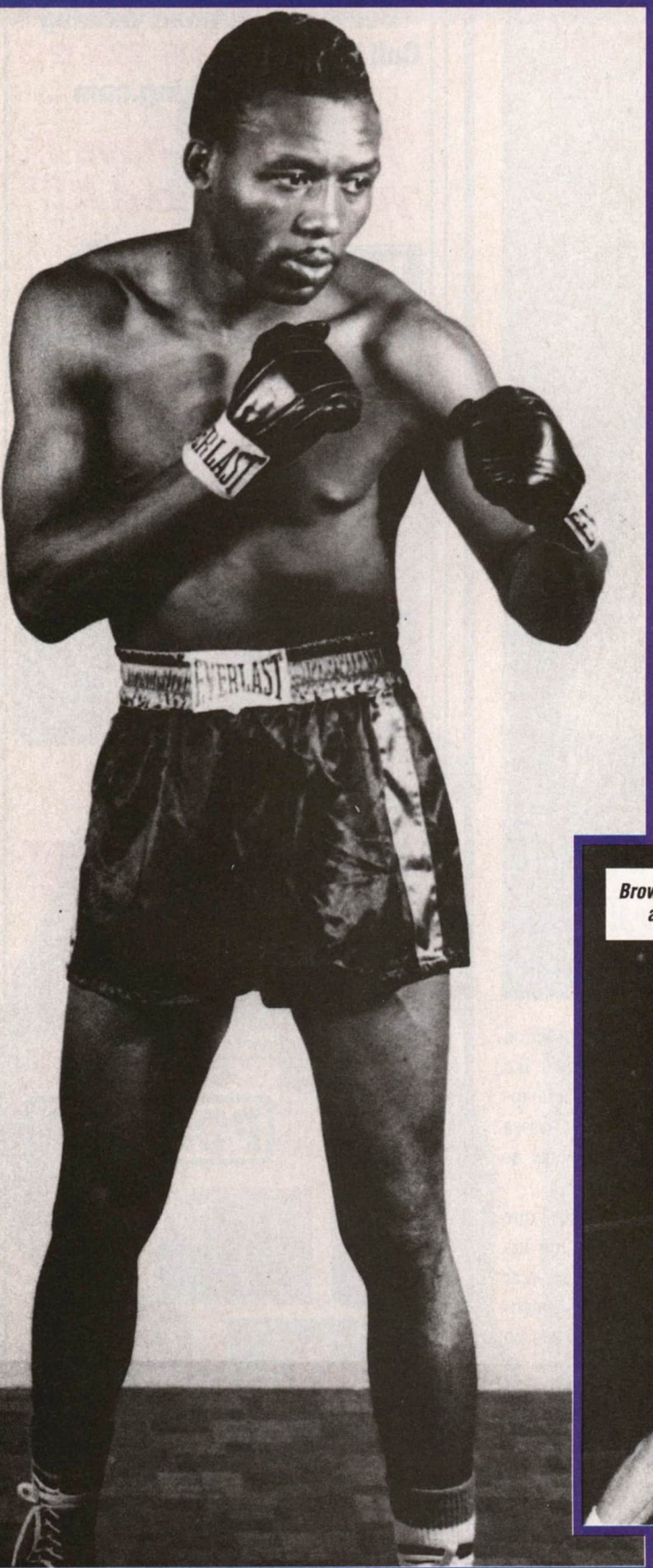
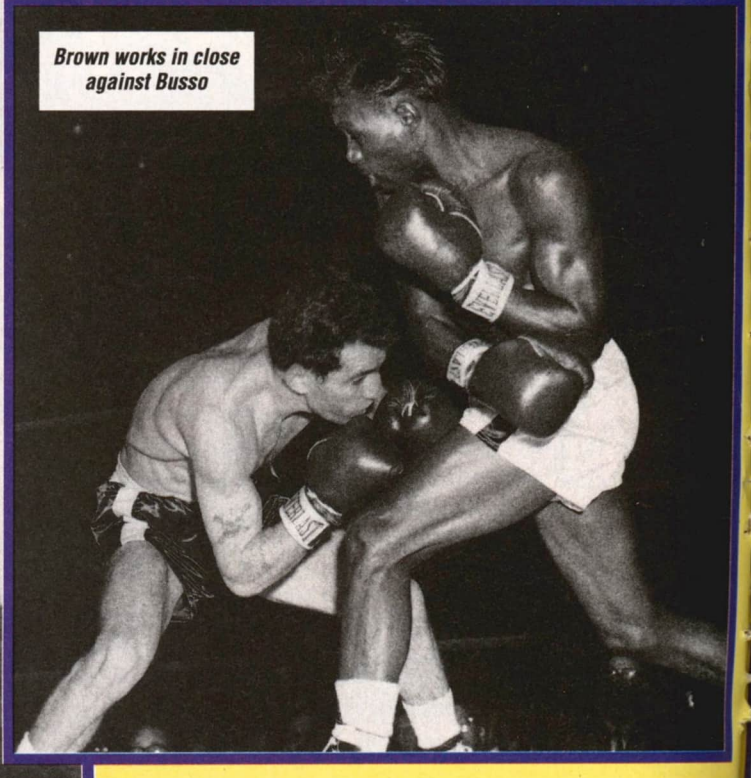
JOE BROWN VS



Brown's strengths: He was a wily defensive boxer with a punishing jab, solid right cross, good combinations, sharp counterpunching skills, and all the tricks in the books. He won the world title in his 87th fight, at age 31, and successfully defended it 11 times (six on stoppages) over the next five years, eight months. He would occasionally lose non-title fights, but it was different when the title was at stake. For instance, Johnny Busso outpointed him to break an 18-fight winning streak, but three months later, Brown prevailed in a title defense. He could be impressively resilient, like when he staged a late rally to save his title against southpaw challenger Kenny Lane.

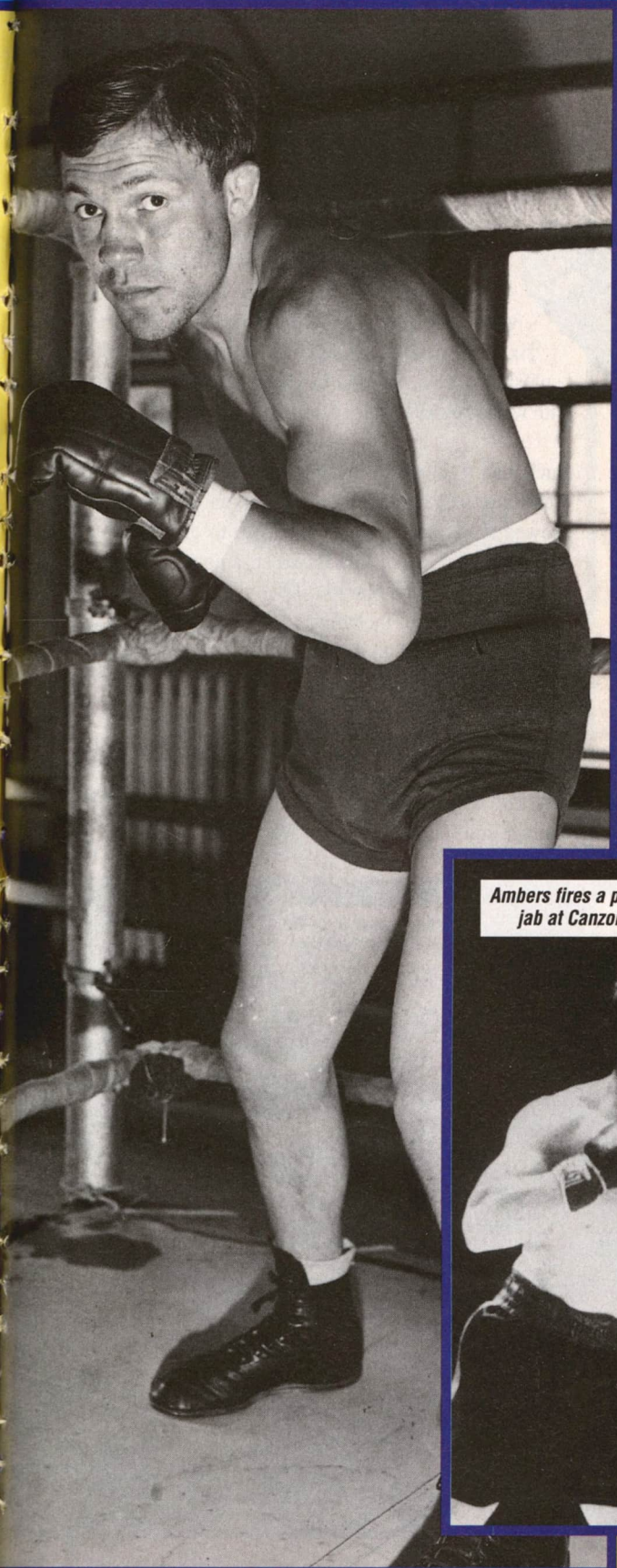
Brown's weaknesses: "Old Bones" had neither great speed nor huge power (47 stoppages in 161 fights—34.3 percent). He became champion in an era devoid of great lightweights—until he faced Ortiz, who trounced him—and was an inconsistent performer. The reason he waited so long for a title shot was that he kept tripping up (15 losses and nine draws in his first nine years), a habit he maintained as champion (three defeats, two draws). He ended up with a record number of blemishes for Hall of Fame entrants—44 defeats and 13 draws, with nine stoppage losses, including five clean knockouts.

Ambers' strengths: He was a clever boxer who combined tight defensive skills, an accurate left jab, and a pesky uppercut, with persistent aggression and enormous resilience. He fought in an era packed with great lightweights and beat two of



Brown works in close against Busso

LOU AMBERS

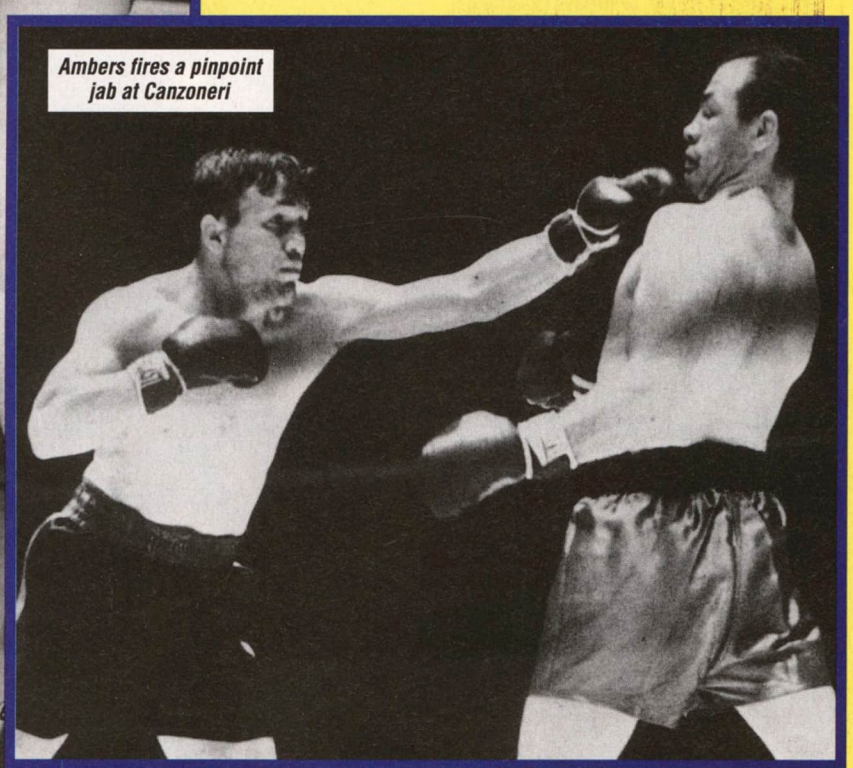


the best—Tony Canzoneri and Henry Armstrong. He went undefeated in his first 35 fights, and lost only two of his next 30 before finally outjabbing and outhustling Canzoneri for the title. After two defenses, he lost it to Armstrong in a vicious battle, but then won 15 straight, including a decision over Armstrong to regain the title, and retired with only eight losses out of 104 bouts.

Ambers' weaknesses: He was a light puncher at the world-class level (30 stoppages—28.8 percent), with none of his title wins ending early. His achievements were not as impressive as the record suggests. Canzoneri easily beat a peak Ambers in their first fight, but was past his best in their two return fights. His win over Armstrong was a robbery. Soon after that draining fight, Lew Jenkins dropped Ambers four times on his way to a third-round stoppage, and then retired him at the age of 27 with a seventh-round beating.

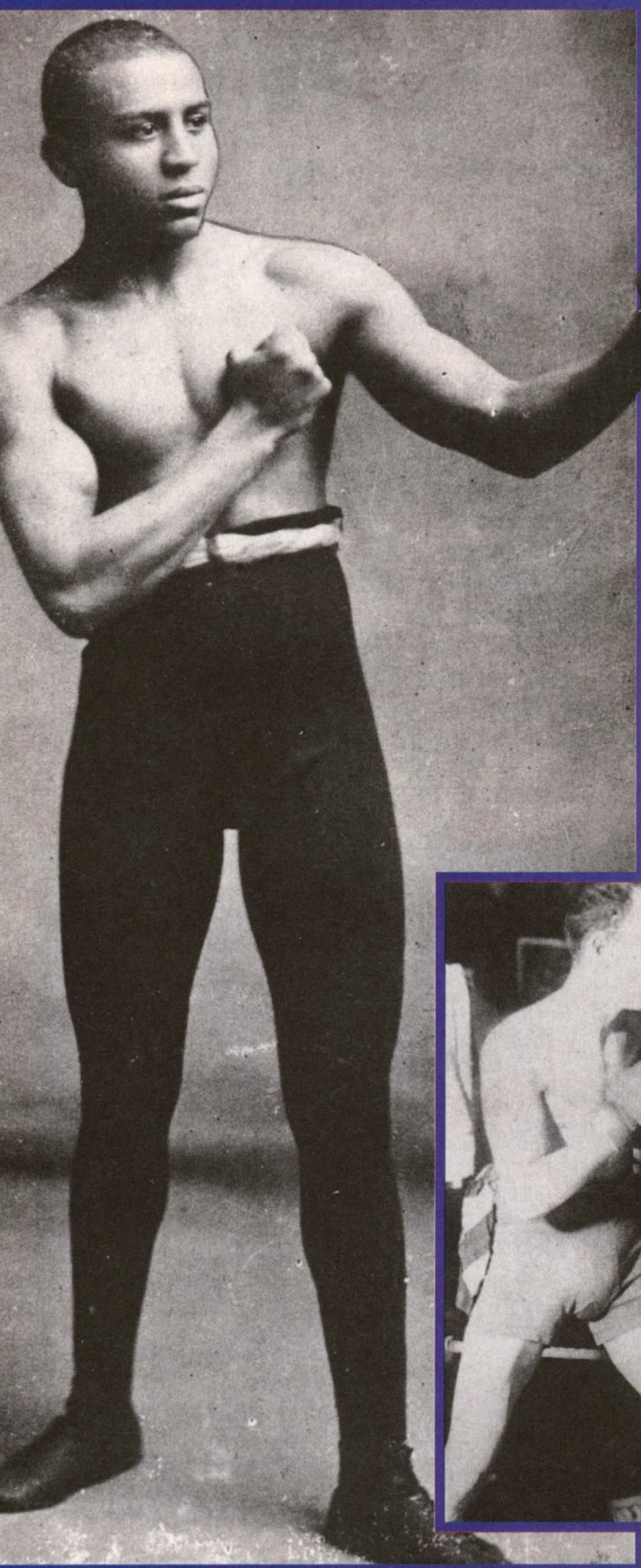
Style matchup: The 5'6" Ambers was an extremely busy boxer who could jab and move effectively and he was also a talented in-fighter. The 5'7½" Brown preferred a slower pace and was best at longer range, throwing left-right combinations.

Outcome: Ambers is intent on upsetting Brown's languid rhythm, outworking his rival, but taking some stiff jabs and hard crosses for his trouble. Ambers then elects to fight up close, using his uppercut to good effect. In round 11, Brown drops him with a right and picks up his work rate, but Ambers roars back to win a majority decision.



Ambers fires a pinpoint jab at Canzoneri

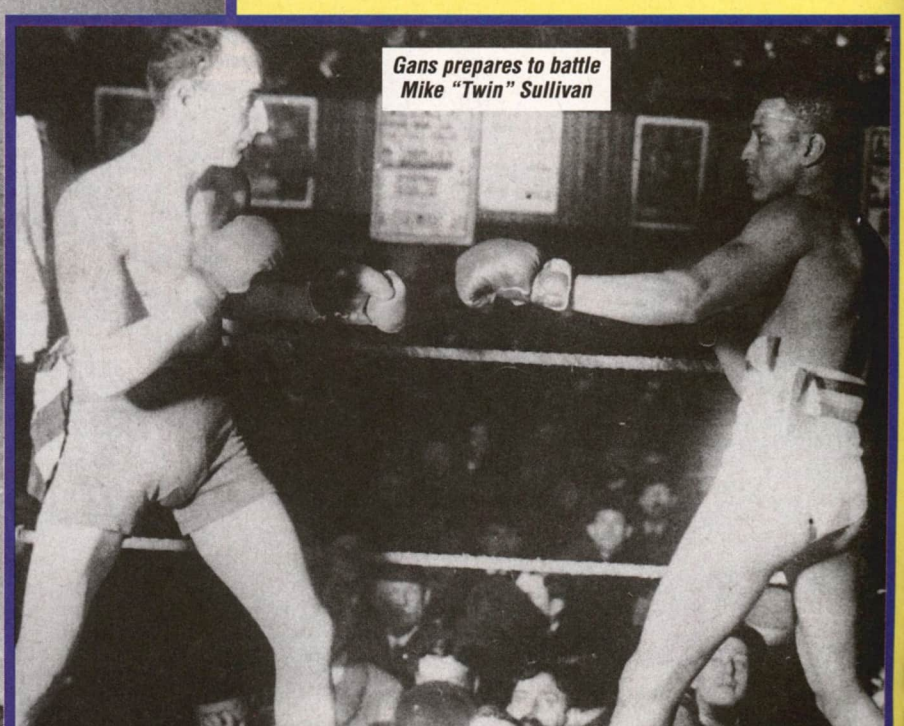
JOE GANS VS



Gans' strengths: Fondly rated by THE RING Publisher Nat Fleischer as the greatest lightweight of all, Gans was a defensive wizard with dynamite in his fists. He lost just eight of 155 fights and stopped 85 opponents—54.8 percent. Brilliant at slipping punches with minimum effort, Gans was also extremely durable (for example, he beat Battling Nelson in 42 rounds when past his best). He flattened Frank Erne in one round to win the world title in his 103rd fight and held it for more than six years, making six defenses, until, suffering from tuberculosis, he was outlasted by Nelson. He also fought a draw with world welterweight champion Joe Walcott.

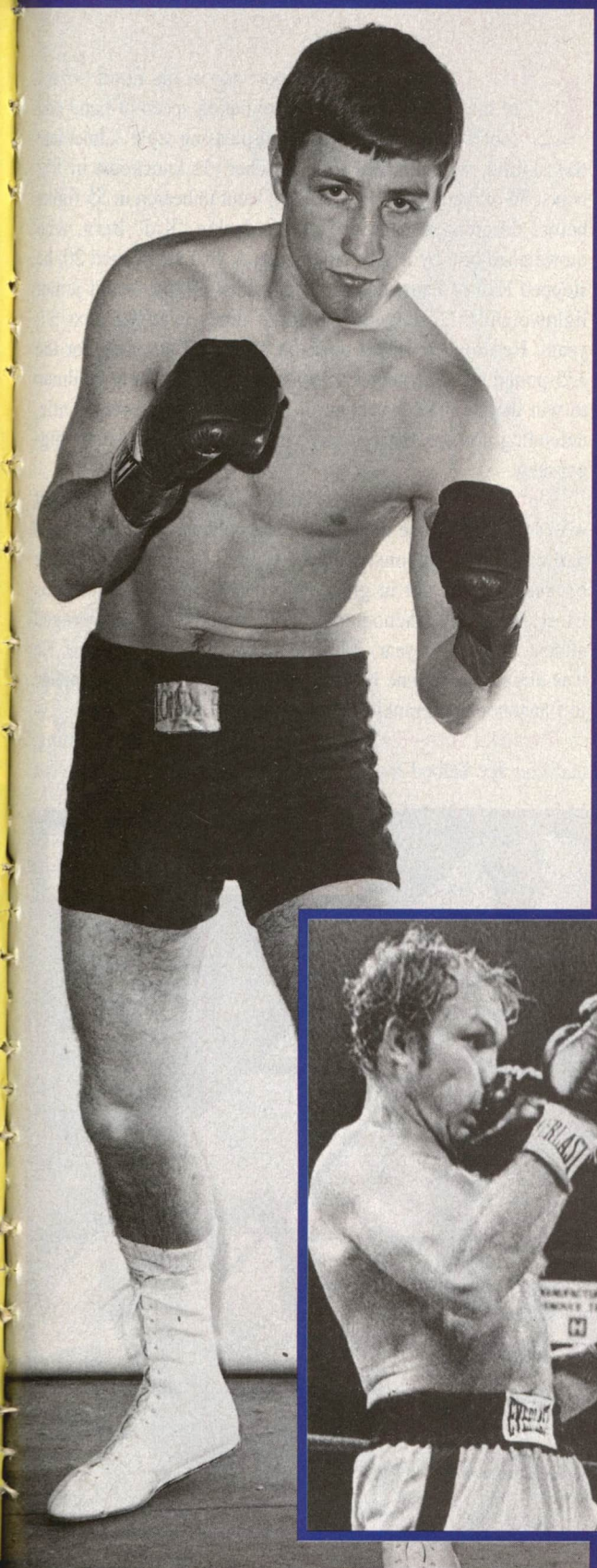
Gans' weaknesses: His peak came 65 years before Buchanan's, in which time boxing made huge advances in technique and conditioning, but even in his own time he showed limitations. Erne used his jab to outbox Gans in their first fight, stopping him in 12. Later, a novice, 139-pound Sam Langford outpointed him in a 15-round non-title fight. He was stopped five times, including four clean knockouts (although Gans later admitted taking a dive in his two-round kayo loss to Terry McGovern).

Buchanan's strengths: He was an excellent defensive boxer with beautiful footwork, a long, fast jab, and every other punch in the book. He had quick hands, feet, and reflexes and was also a good in-fighter with a hard chin and immense courage and stamina. He effectively won his first 44 fights (his



Gans prepares to battle Mike "Twin" Sullivan

KEN BUCHANAN



points "loss" to Miguel Velazquez in Spain was a joke), beating Ismael Laguna for the title in 100-degree Puerto Rican heat. He held it for almost two years, defending twice until Roberto Duran stopped him with a controversial low blow after the bell ending the 13th round, having fouled him throughout the fight. Duran refused him a return. Buchanan went on to stop Carlos Ortiz and outbox Jim Watt.

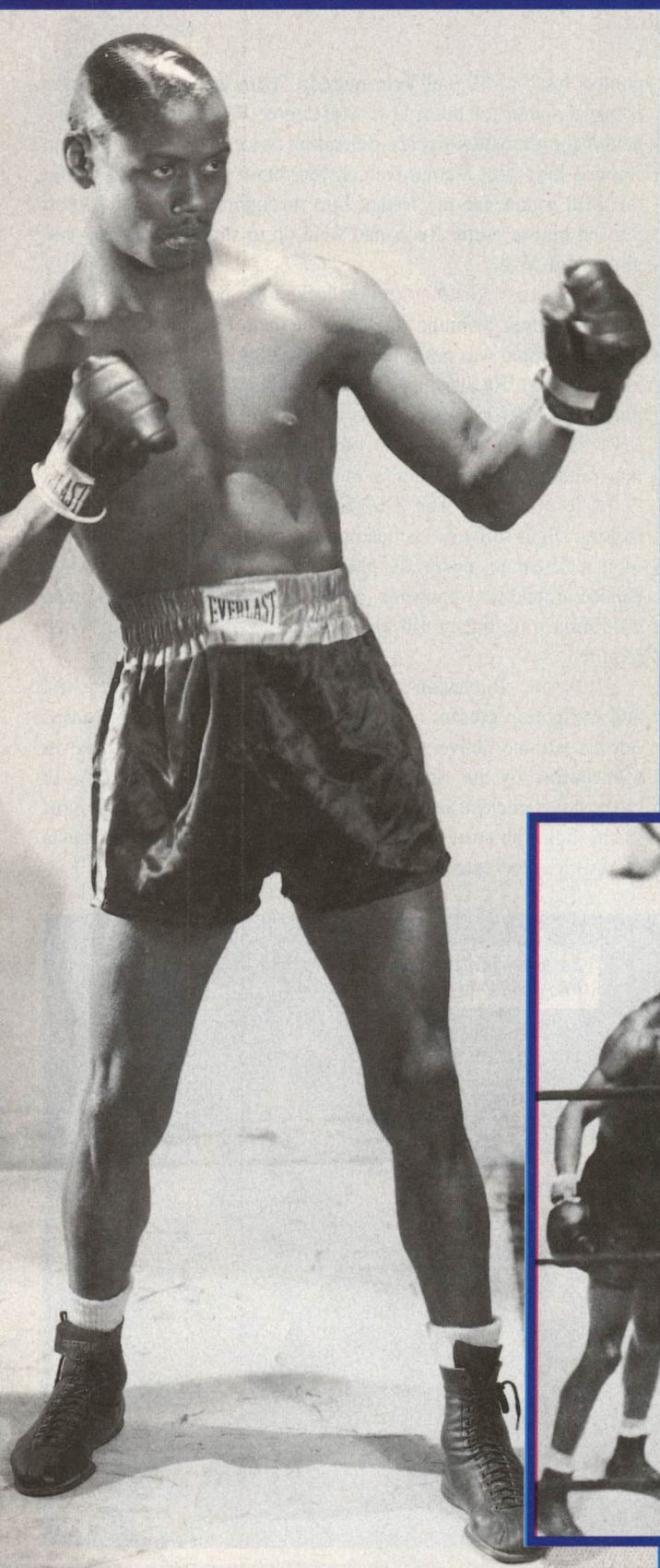
Buchanan's weaknesses: He lacked the power or strength to hold off Duran, winning just three of their 13 rounds. He was a slow starter and was not a huge hitter (27 knockouts in 69 fights—39.1 percent). He suffered cuts against Laguna and Duran, and a prefight eye injury cost him his fight against Ishimatsu Suzuki in 1975. He made an ill-advised comeback in 1979, losing five out of nine (although three of these points losses were dubious).

Style matchup: The 5'6" Gans economized on movement, making slight shifts of his head to slip punches before landing his own well-timed, perfectly placed blows. The 5'9" Buchanan danced around his opponents, peppering them with jabs and quick combinations, but could also exchange at close range when required.

Outcome: Buchanan's speed, footwork, variety of punches, and in-fighting present new challenges to Gans. The Scot snakes out his jab and delivers six-punch combinations of a kind never seen before by the American. Gans, whose right eye starts to close, holds in close and lands the occasional counter, but for most of the fight, he struggles to catch the dancing master. Buchanan wins a clear-cut unanimous decision.

Buchanan gives an aged Ortiz a mouthful of leather

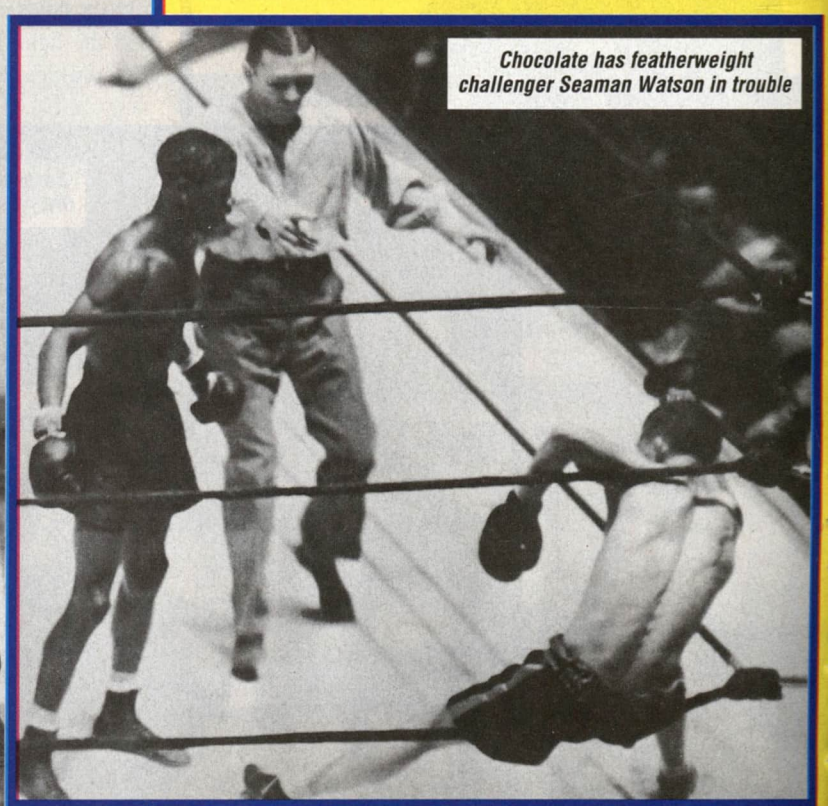
KID CHOCOLATE



Chocolate's strengths: He was one of the finest boxers of the 1930s, combining scintillating speed of hand and foot with a two-fisted, crowd-pleasing style. Chocolate was skillful, stylish, and a solid puncher (51 knockouts in 150 bouts, 36 of them in his first 70). He went unbeaten in 55 fights before dropping a close decision to Jackie "Kid" Berg, who outweighed him by nearly 10 pounds. A year later, aged 20, he stopped Hall of Fame entrant Benny Bass for the world junior lightweight title, defending it three times over the next 3½ years. He dropped a split decision to Tony Canzoneri for the 135-pound and 140-pound titles before stopping Lew Feldman to win the New York version of the world featherweight title, defending it twice. He lost only nine times, mostly against bigger men.

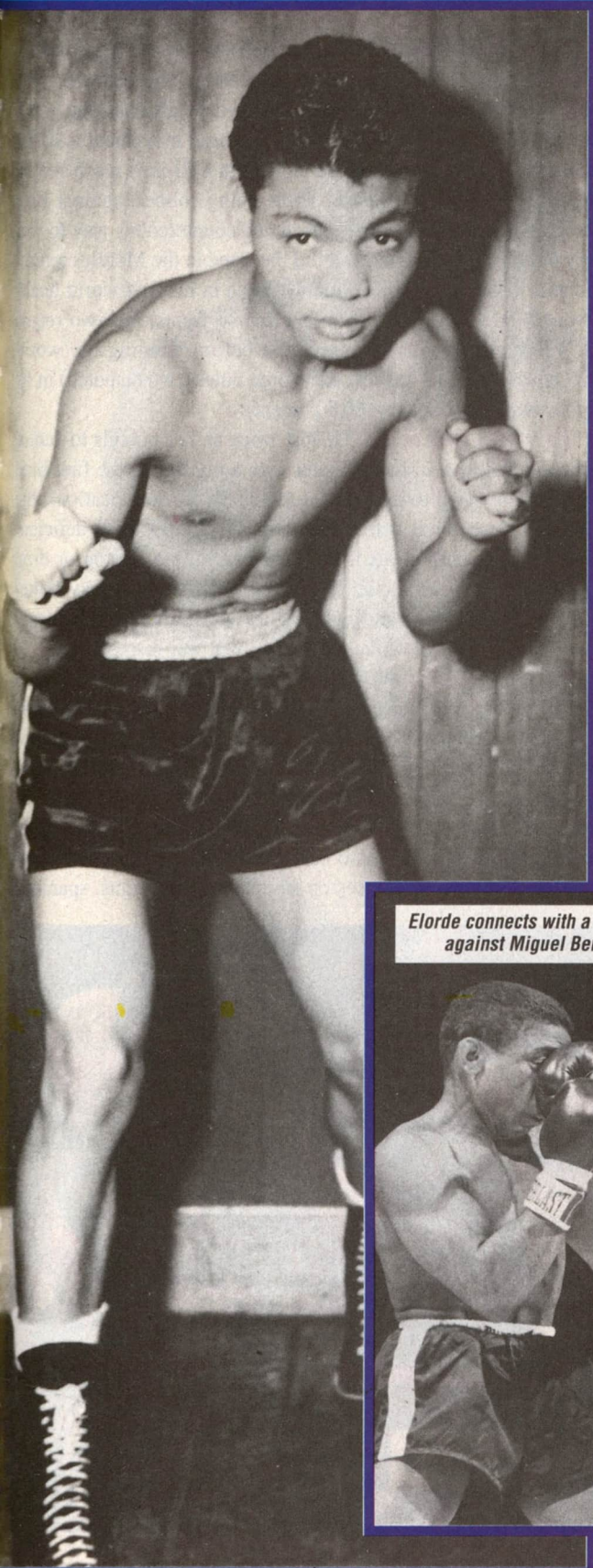
Chocolate's weaknesses: He was really a featherweight who sometimes came in as light as 123 pounds at his peak. His dedication was inconsistent, and some of his losses came because he was not in great shape. The combination of his lifestyle and his phenomenal level of activity (he averaged almost 15 fights a year) meant his peak did not last long. He was already in decline before he was 23—losing via stoppage to Canzoneri and Frankie Klick.

Elorde's strengths: Elorde's determination, conditioning, and courage helped make him one of finest southpaws of his



Chocolate has featherweight challenger Seaman Watson in trouble

VS. FLASH ELORDE

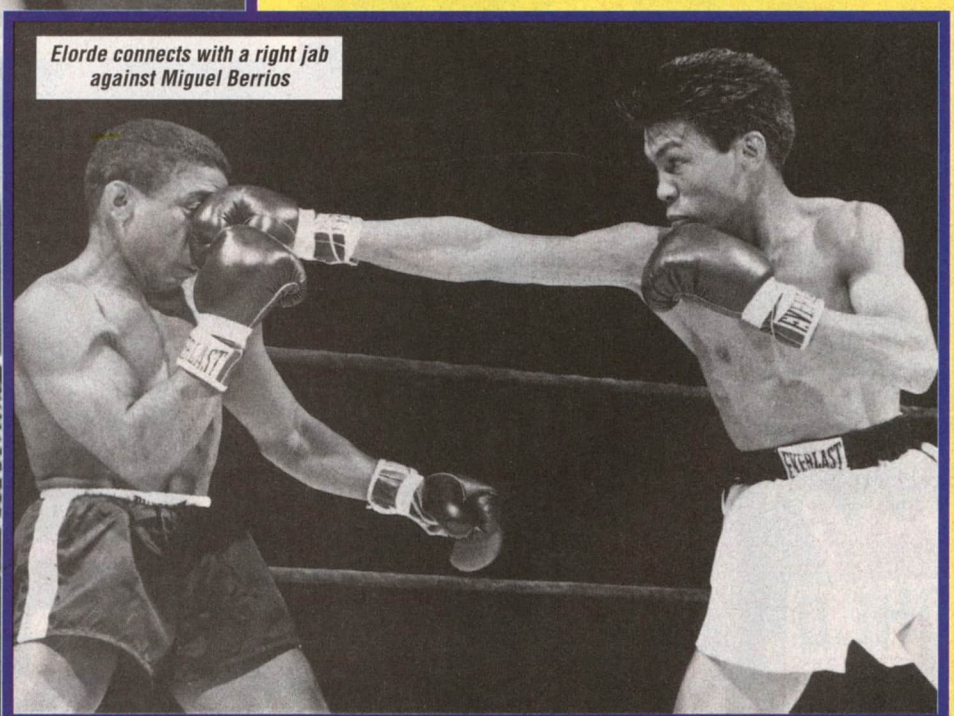


time. His strong legs gave him good speed around the ring and his fast fists and body blows raked up the points. After beating Sandy Saddler in a non-title fight, he lost his featherweight title challenge in the 13th round when ahead on points after Saddler used his elbow to open a cut. Four years on, he stopped Harold Gomes for the world junior lightweight title in his 72nd bout, defending it 10 times over the next seven years before losing it on a majority decision at age 32. He also beat several top lightweights, including Hall of Fame entrant Ismael Laguna.

Elorde's weaknesses: He was never a consistent performer, losing 27 and drawing two out of 117. Even as world champion, he lost four fights. He was also stopped four times, and as Carlos Ortiz proved—twice dishing out severe beatings in lightweight title fights—he was relatively easy to hit at the elite level. Elorde also was not a great puncher—only 33 stoppages (28.2 percent).

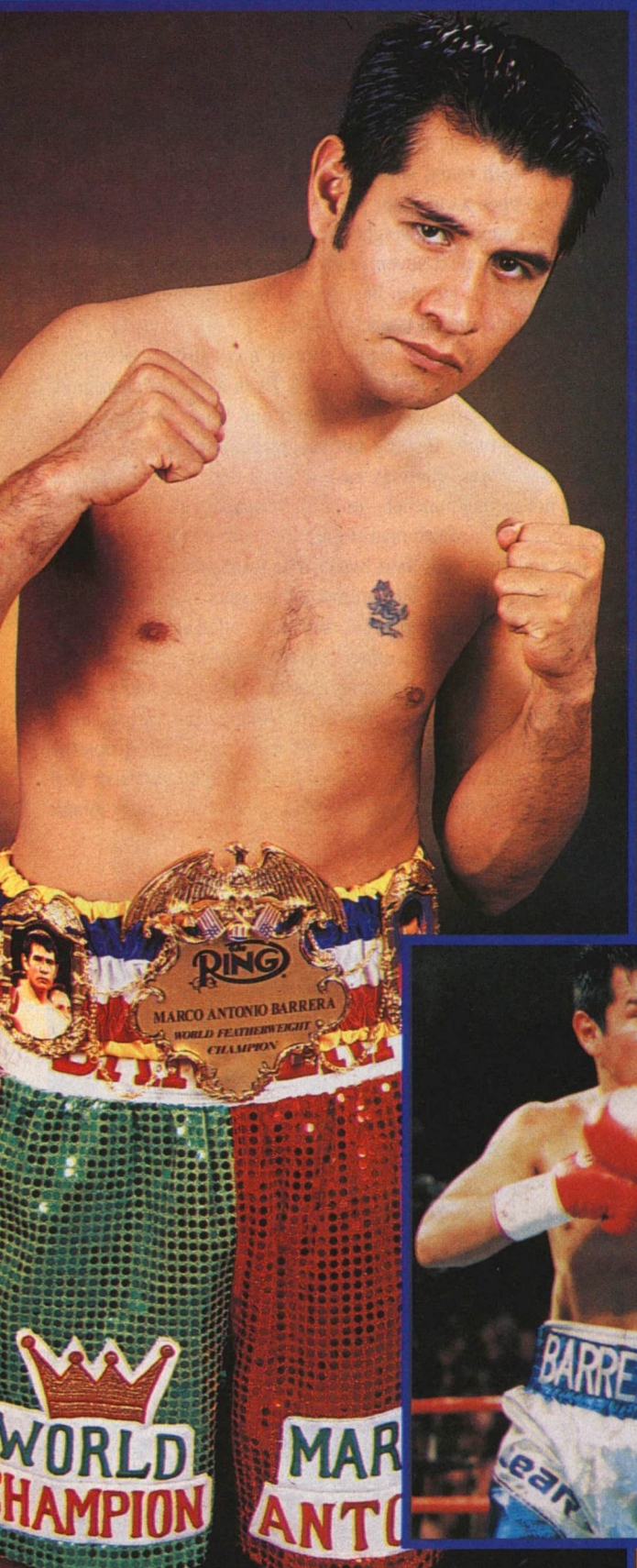
Style matchup: Both men stood 5'6", and both were quick on their feet and busy with their hands. The southpaw Elorde was an excellent bodypuncher. The orthodox Chocolate was an effective in-fighter with a jarring uppercut, and he excelled at long range.

Outcome: Elorde, who enjoys a four-pound weight advantage, picks up points with his lightning attacks to the head and body in the early rounds. His southpaw style troubles the Cuban, until Chocolate starts stepping in with his right cross. He drops the Filipino in round seven, and his edge in power and defensive skill becomes clear in the later rounds. Chocolate wins a close unanimous decision.



Elorde connects with a right jab against Miguel Berrios

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA



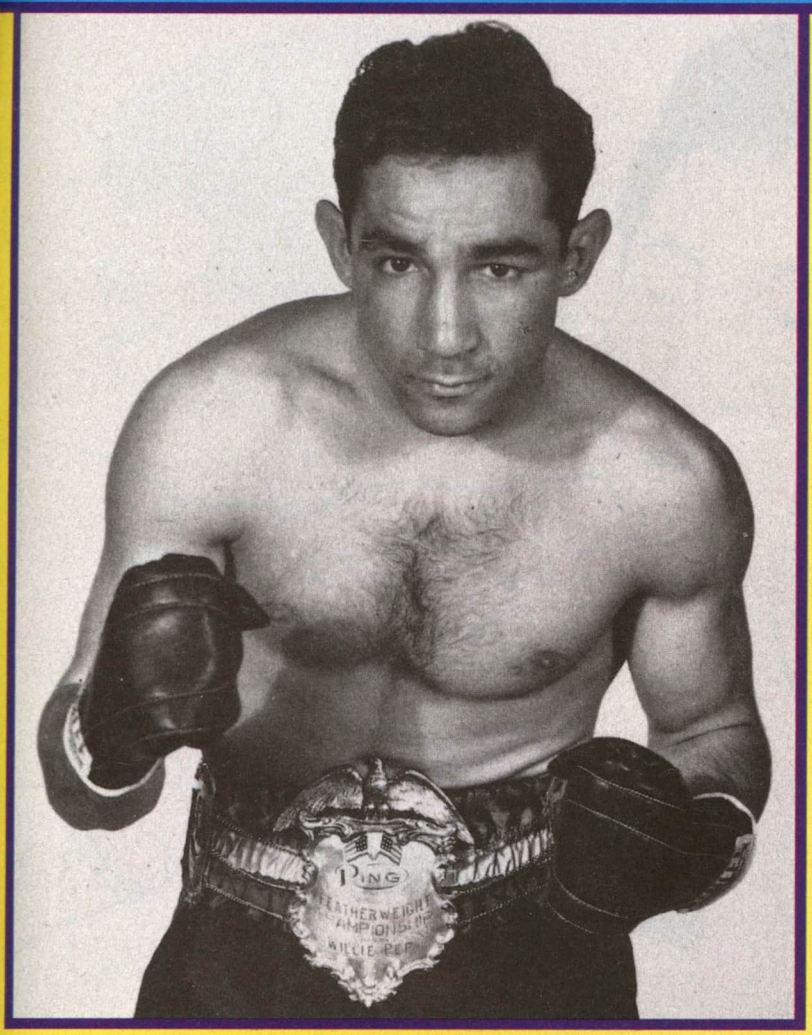
Barrera's strengths: He has become the complete boxing machine: outstanding defensive boxer and heavy-handed puncher. Renowned for bodyblows, he also has one of the best jabs around and uses his gloves and head movement to avoid punishment. He's a big featherweight with a 70-inch reach, yet he makes the weight with ease. After being robbed against Erik Morales at junior feather, he jabbed and countered his way to victory over Naseem Hamed, and did the same in the Morales return. He easily outboxed skillful Johnny Tapia in his first world featherweight title defense. He won his first 43 fights, had two reigns as WBO super bantamweight titlist before winning the world 126-pound title, and has lost only three times (two disputed) in 60 fights, with 40 stoppages (66.7 percent).

Barrera's weaknesses: He lost twice at 122 pounds to Junior Jones—a tall, quick sharp-shooter with a big right—the first time in what amounted to a knockout (officially disqualification), the second a close points defeat. He corrected his defensive deficiencies, but lost some of his fire and power, failing to stop or drop Hamed, Morales, or Tapia. His featherweight results may flatter him—Hamed, Tapia, and Kevin Kelley were past their best (especially the latter two), while his Morales win was disputed.

Pep's strengths: Perhaps the greatest defensive master of them all, Pep was exceedingly difficult to hit. He would duck, side-step, slip, or pick punches out of the air. He would draw punches with deft feints and then reply with perfectly timed counters. He once won a round without throwing a punch, wowing the judges with his elusive brilliance (against Jackie Graves, whom he stopped in eight). He also had quick hands, ending five of his nine successful title defenses on stoppages (two reigns, spanning

Barrera nearly beheads Hamed

VS. WILLIE PEP



7½ years). He won his first 65 fights (and lost just one of his first 136) and ended a career spanning 26 years with only 11 losses out of 242 bouts.

Pep's weaknesses: He was not a heavy puncher (65 stoppages—26.9 percent) and could not match Saddler and Sammy Angott when it came to physical strength. He suffered cuts and swellings against Saddler, who beat him three out of four times (although these bouts came after Pep was badly injured in a plane crash). Earlier, lightweight king Angott beat Pep by tying him up and giving him no room to work. Pep was stopped six times, and there were rumors he threw at least one fight.

Style matchup: The 5'5½" Pep would glide gracefully around the ring, stabbing out his jab, throwing plenty of feints, and using his hands, feet, and reflexes to avoid punches. The 5'7" Barrera boxes behind a high guard, blocking punches, pumping out his strong jab and stiff right cross, or moving in to throw heavy hooks to the body.

Outcome: Pep has a clear edge in speed, and although he's the lighter puncher, he lands more. Barrera falls behind and changes tactics—using his greater strength to crowd Pep, landing hooks to his short ribs. He starts to close the gap, but can't quite do enough, and Pep wins a unanimous decision.

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MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA vs. WILLIE PEP

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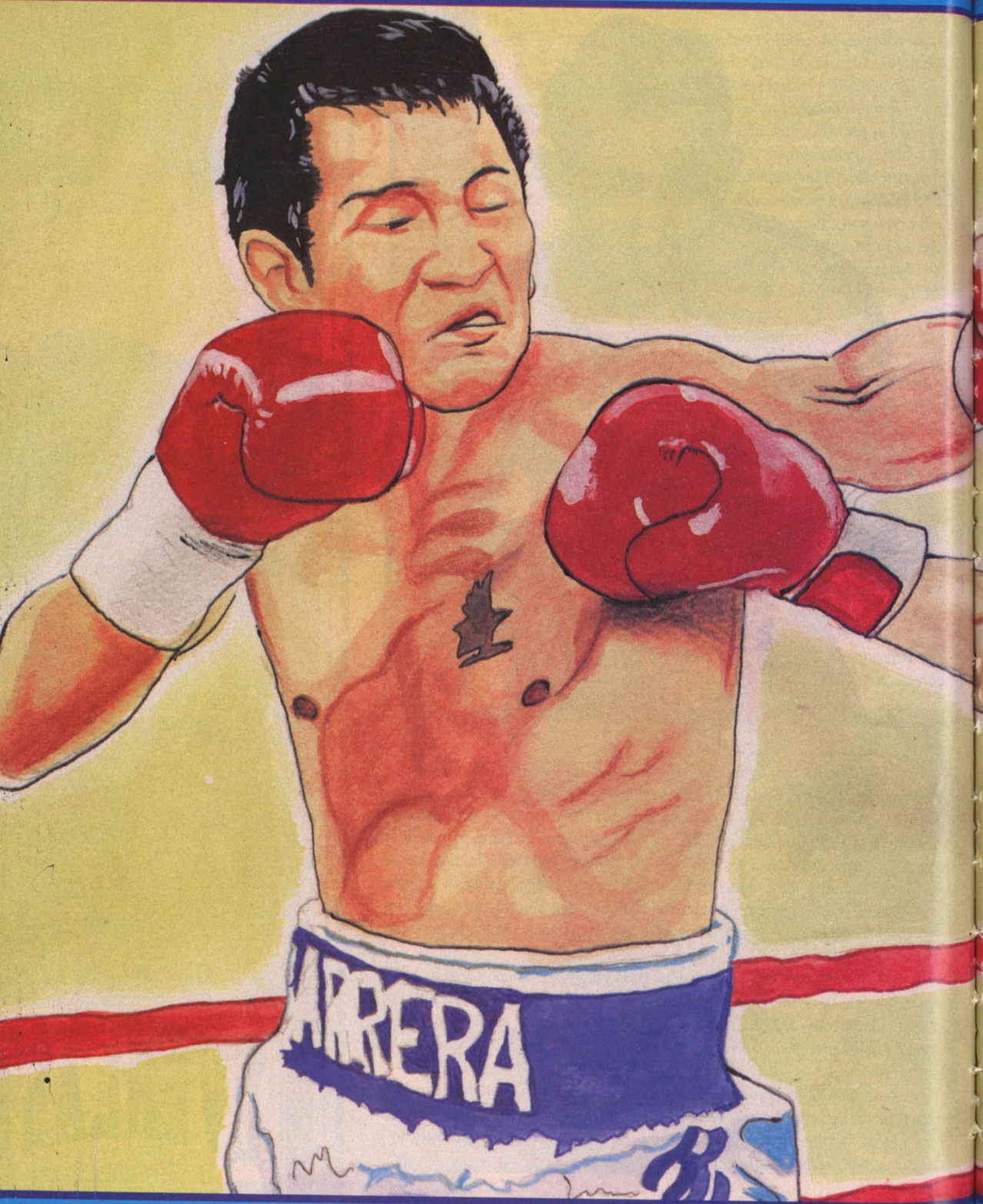
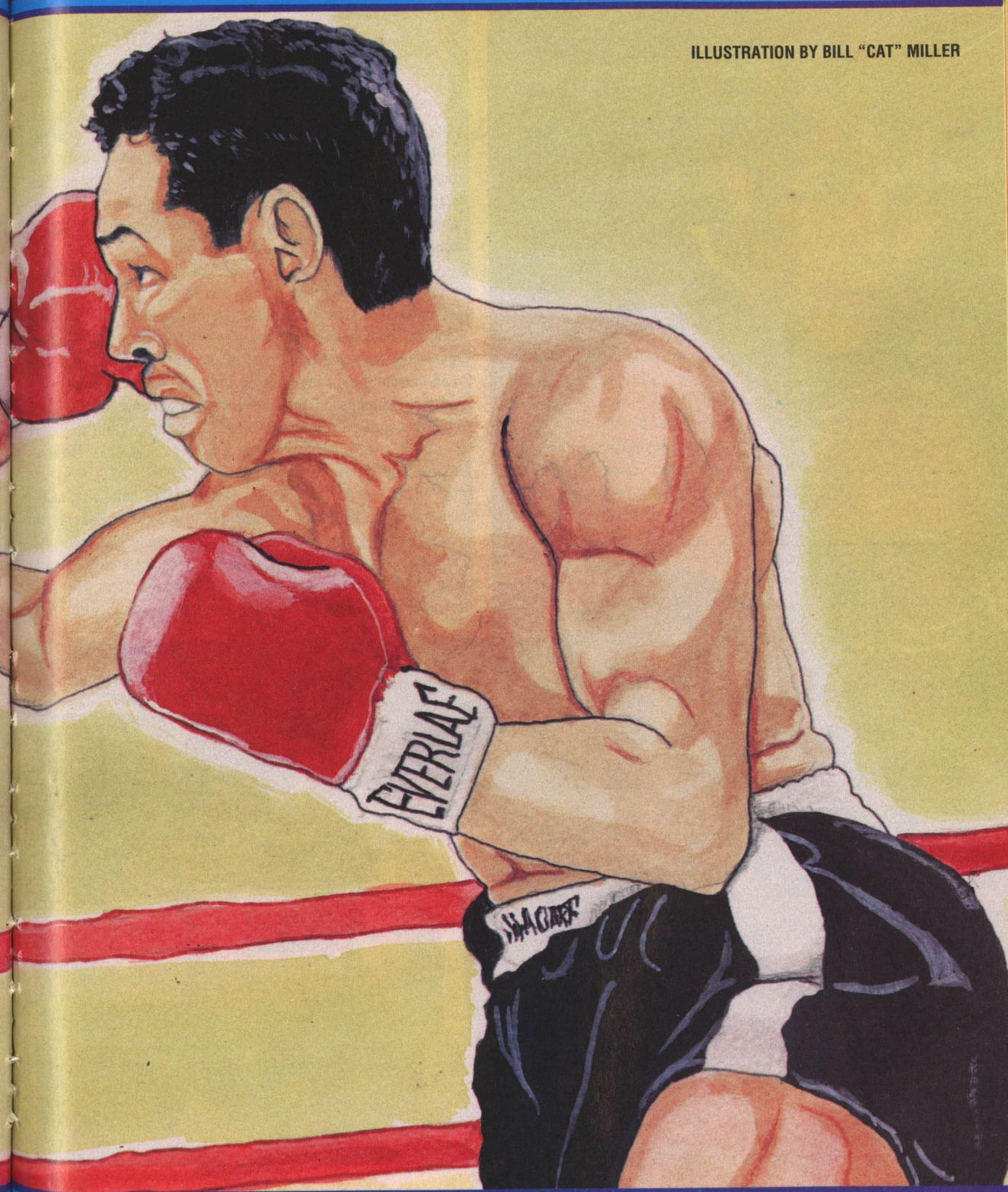




RUBEN OLIVARES

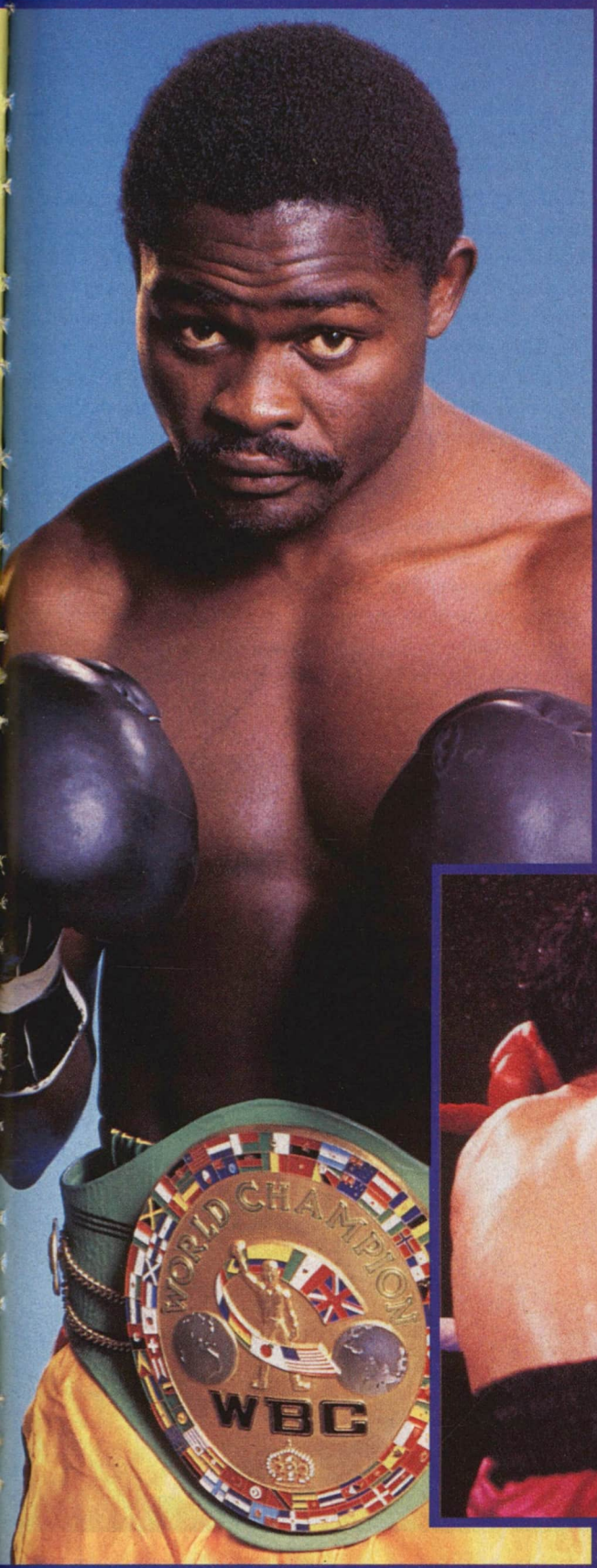
Olivares' strengths: One of the hardest punchers, pound-for-pound, in boxing history, he went unbeaten in his first 61 fights, winning 56 inside the distance. He was a ferocious fighter, with a huge left hook. He won the world bantamweight title by knocking out Lionel Rose in five rounds and defended it twice before a cut eye cost him the title against Chucho Castillo. He soon regained the title, making two more defenses. After a spell as WBA featherweight king, he stopped Bobby Chacon for the WBC featherweight title.

Olivares' weaknesses: By the time he moved to featherweight he was past his peak, and was soundly whipped by bigger men like Alexis Arguello, Danny Lopez, and Eusebio Pedroza. Poor discipline gave him weight problems, and his aggressive style and high level of activity (71 fights in seven years) meant that he absorbed plenty of punishment. His punch resistance diminished and he became more prone to cuts. His overall record before abandoning the bantamweight division was 68-2-1 (63), but after that, it was 20-11-2 (15). He was stopped nine times.

Nelson's strengths: Nelson was a superb defensive tactician and a big knockout puncher. He was a clever boxer with good head movement and fine counterpunching skills, a solid chin, and power in both hands—he had a career knockout ratio after 46 fights (five losses, two draws) of 60.9 percent. His only defeat at 126 pounds came when, as a late substitute, after only

Olivares digs a left to Jesus Pimentel's body

vs. AZUMAH NELSON

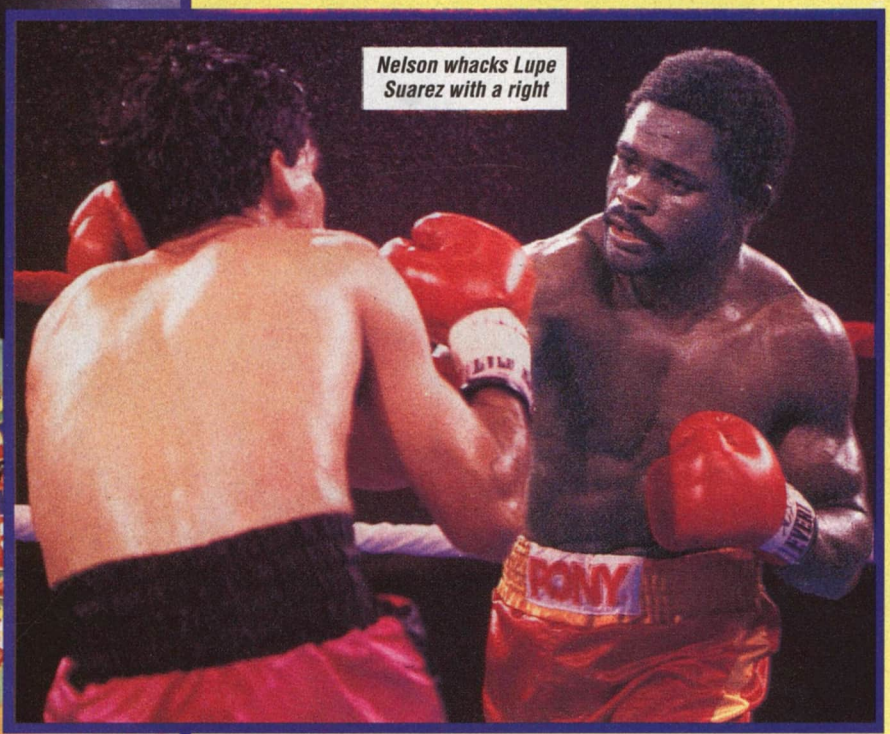


13 fights, he challenged Salvador Sanchez for the WBC title and lost a tight tussle in round 15. He later stopped Wilfredo Gomez in 11 one-sided rounds to take the WBC title, which he defended six times, before lifting the WBC super featherweight title, which he defended 10 times in a five-year reign. He regained the title and made one more successful defense. He retired at age 40 having beaten seven titleholders, including two Hall of Fame members (Gomez and Jeff Fenech).

Nelson's weaknesses: He could be troubled by speed, as Jim McDonnell showed, and he could not find a way through Pernell Whitaker's defense when he challenged for the world lightweight title. Also, the robust Mario Martinez held him to a disputed decision in their first fight. The marauding Fenech was robbed by a draw in his first fight with Nelson (although Nelson's malaria probably contributed).

Style matchup: The 5'4" Olivares was in perpetual attack mode, bobbing and weaving inside to blast away with heavy artillery, particularly his left hook. The 5'5" Nelson was a careful boxer who seldom wasted a move. He had a hard jab and was always dangerous with his hooks and crosses and could box at any range.

Outcome: This is a one-sided fight. The bigger, stronger Ghanaian easily deflects Olivares' relentless charges. His precision punching opens cuts over Olivares' eyes. He drops the Mexican with a right cross in round six and knocks him out in round seven.



Nelson whacks Lupe Suarez with a right

SANDY SADDLER VS

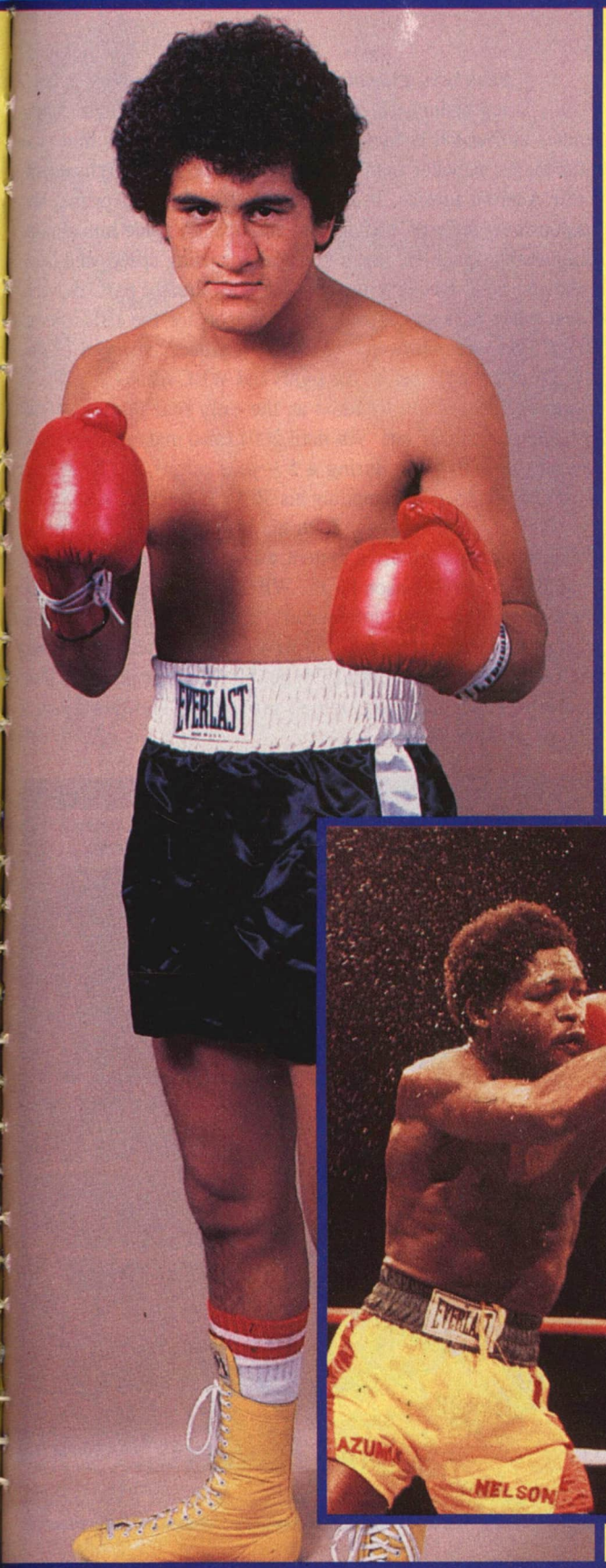
Saddler's strengths: Tall, exceptionally strong, hard-chinned, and a brutal puncher (103 knockouts in 162 fights, 63.6 percent), he was also one of the roughest fighters ever. He won the featherweight title knocking out Willie Pep in four rounds in his 94th bout, but was outpointed in the return. He won the world junior lightweight title (and made two defenses) and then regained the featherweight title by stopping Pep in eight. He reigned for six years (broken by two years' military service) and retired as champion after suffering eye damage in a motor crash. One of his defenses was against Pep, who was stopped in 10. Another was a 13th-round stoppage of Flash Elorde. He also beat two lightweight champions, Paddy DeMarco and Joe Brown, and drew with another, Jimmy Carter.

Saddler's weaknesses: He was not particularly clever or elusive, which meant he had trouble with exceptional speed and skill as Pep and Elorde illustrated. His reputation was inflated by his wins over Pep, who had suffered serious injuries in a plane crash prior to any of their meetings. Several of his title wins (including two against Pep and one against Elorde) were aided by fouls. He lost 16 bouts, including 10 defeats in his world championship years.

Sanchez' strengths: He was a quick, skillful boxer who specialized in sharp, hard, accurate counterpunching (32 kayos in 46 fights—69.6 percent). He also had a sound chin. He used his footwork and reflexes to avoid Danny Lopez' bombs and his precision punching to break him apart in 13 rounds to lift

Heavy-handed Saddler blasts Bill Bossio with a right

SALVADOR SANCHEZ

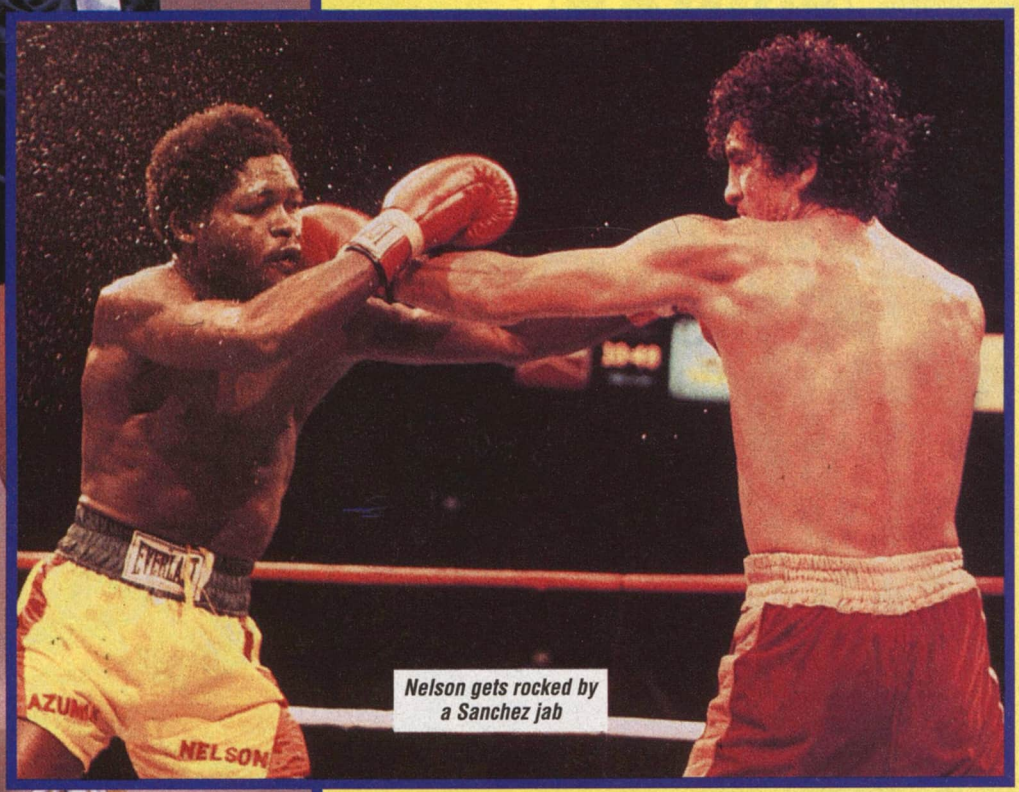


the WBC title, which he defended nine times. He died in a car crash at the age of 23 after 44 wins, one points loss, and one draw. One of his defenses was against Wilfredo Gomez, who was stopped in eight one-sided rounds. He also outboxed future WBC titlist Juan LaPorte and stopped Azumah Nelson.

Sanchez' weaknesses: Vulnerability in three title defenses suggested Sanchez could be beaten by the combination of exceptional skill and power. First, the clever Patrick Ford held him to a split decision. Then, the jab and move Pat Cowdell took him to the wire with another split decision. Finally, late substitute novice Nelson used his strength, power, and skill to give Sanchez an uncomfortable 14 rounds.

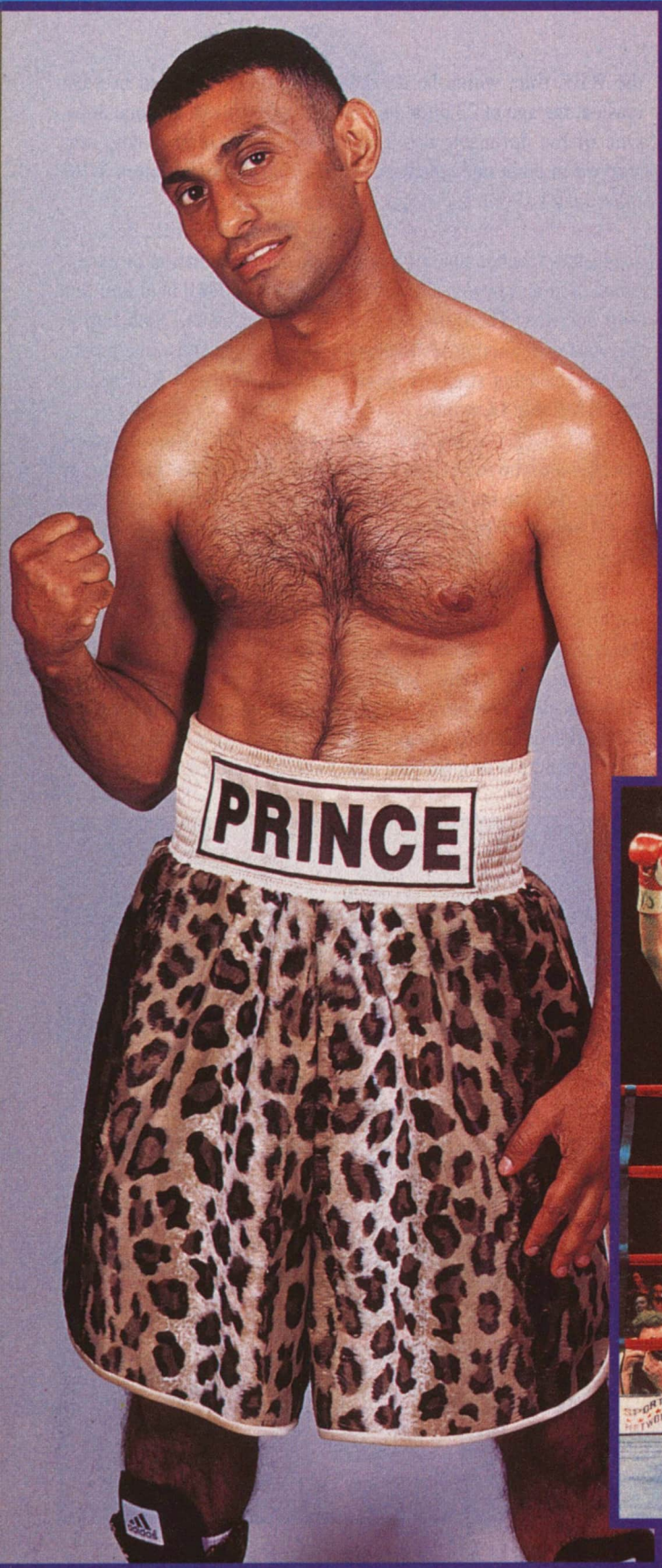
Style matchup: Saddler, slightly taller at 5'8", was an aggressive fighter who made every punch tell. He could use his long jab to box from the outside but also loved to brawl up close. Sanchez was a smoother boxer who moved quickly from behind his jab, countering with stiff punches whenever he saw an opening.

Outcome: The opening rounds belong to Sanchez, who exploits gaps in Saddler's defense. The stronger, harder-hitting American comes on and forces the Mexican back, but is warned several times for fouls, leading to the deduction of two points. However, the low blows and thumbs in the eye drain Sanchez' strength and cloud his vision. Sanchez is still ahead going into the 14th, when he is dropped and then battered to defeat on the ropes.



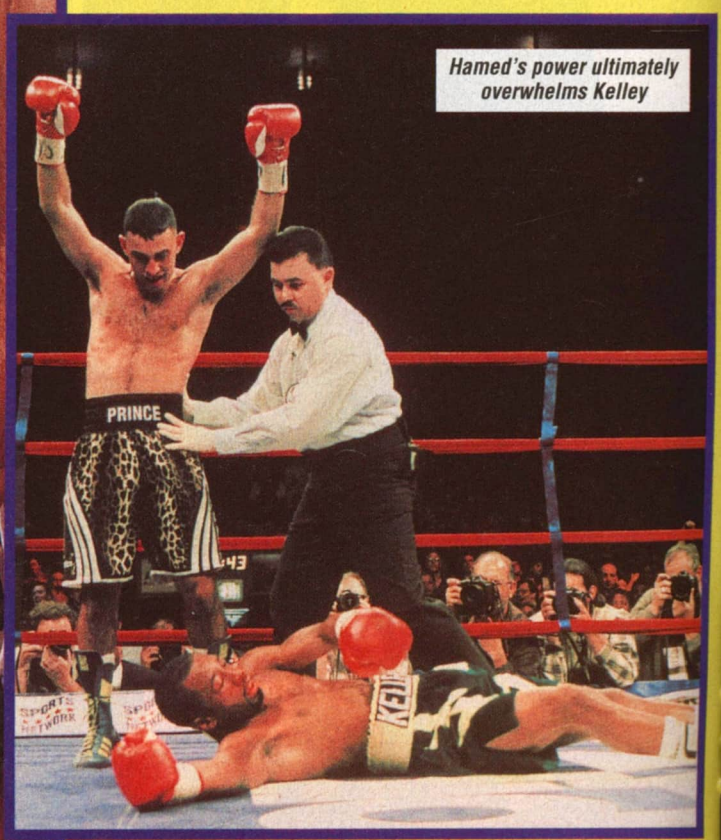
Nelson gets rocked by a Sanchez jab

NASEM HAMED



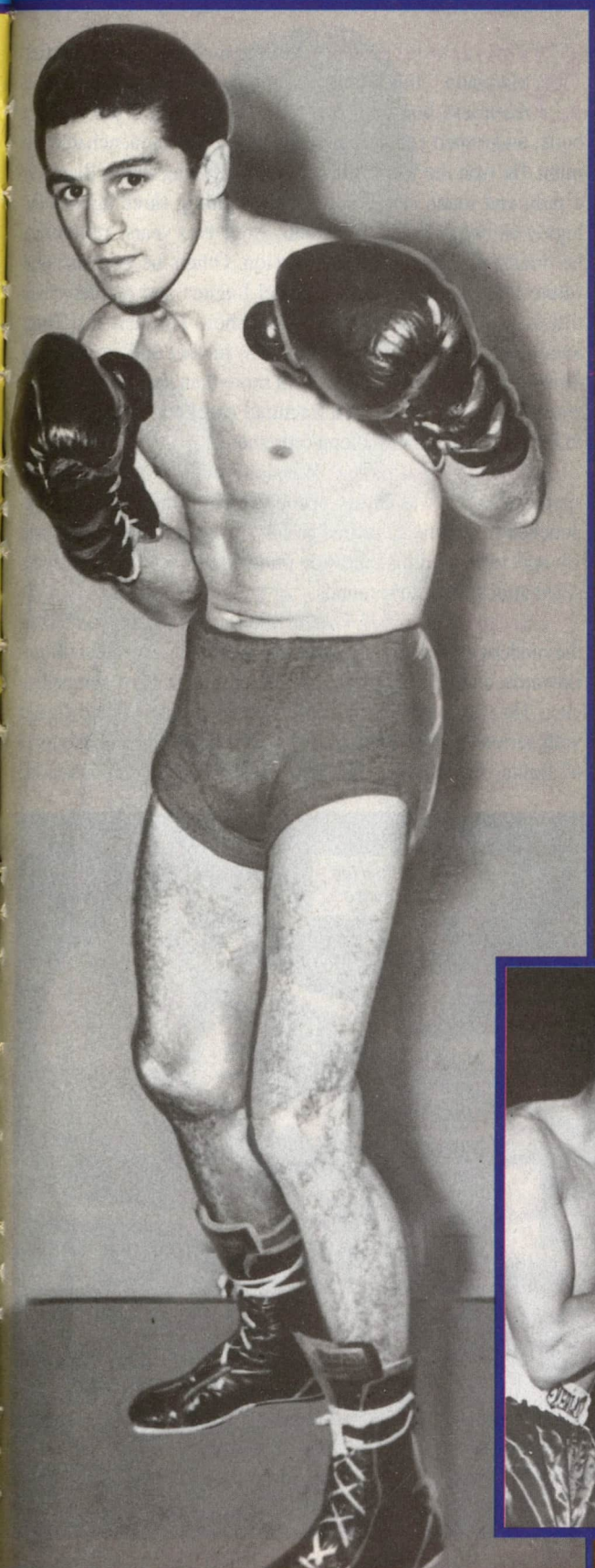
Hamed's strengths: "The Prince" at his peak would have been a handful for the best featherweights in boxing history. He was possibly the hardest single-punch hitter in division history—trainer Oscar Suarez rates him as a far bigger puncher than his heavy-handed junior lightweight star Acelino Freitas. In Hamed's relatively brief prime, his astonishing reflexes, timing, and anticipation made him almost impossible to hit. He had a great jab, dazzling speed, and later showed good recovery powers. He was already past his very best when he knocked out Tom Johnson for the IBF title in 1997, but went on to beat Wilfredo Vazquez (stripped of the WBA belt shortly before the fight) and WBC titlist Cesar Soto, gaining recognition by most as the only real featherweight champion from the late-'90s until 2001 (also making 15 defenses of the WBO title during a 5½-year reign). He beat nine world titleholders in compiling his 36-1 (31) record.

Hamed's weaknesses: With his low guard and high head, Hamed's entire defensive system was based on reflexes. After stopping Steve Robinson for the WBO title, he did less training between fights, fought infrequently, gave up roadwork, ignored his trainer, and ate his way into trouble. The result was that his reflexes slowed and he began to get hit (and dropped). He also became knockout crazy, which proved his undoing against Marco Antonio Barrera.



Hamed's power ultimately overwhelms Kelley

vs. EDER JOFRE



Jofre's strengths: Perhaps the greatest bantamweight of all, he was an elusive boxer with sharp reflexes, an iron chin, and knockout power in both hands (50 knockouts—64.1 percent). He won the NBA world title in 1960, unified in 1961, and made seven defenses until, struggling at the weight, he dropped a split decision to Fighting Harada in Japan in 1965. He soon retired for three years and returned at featherweight, winning all 25 of his remaining fights, including a victory over Jose Legra for the WBC title and a fourth-round knockout over Vicente Saldivar. He retired at age 40.

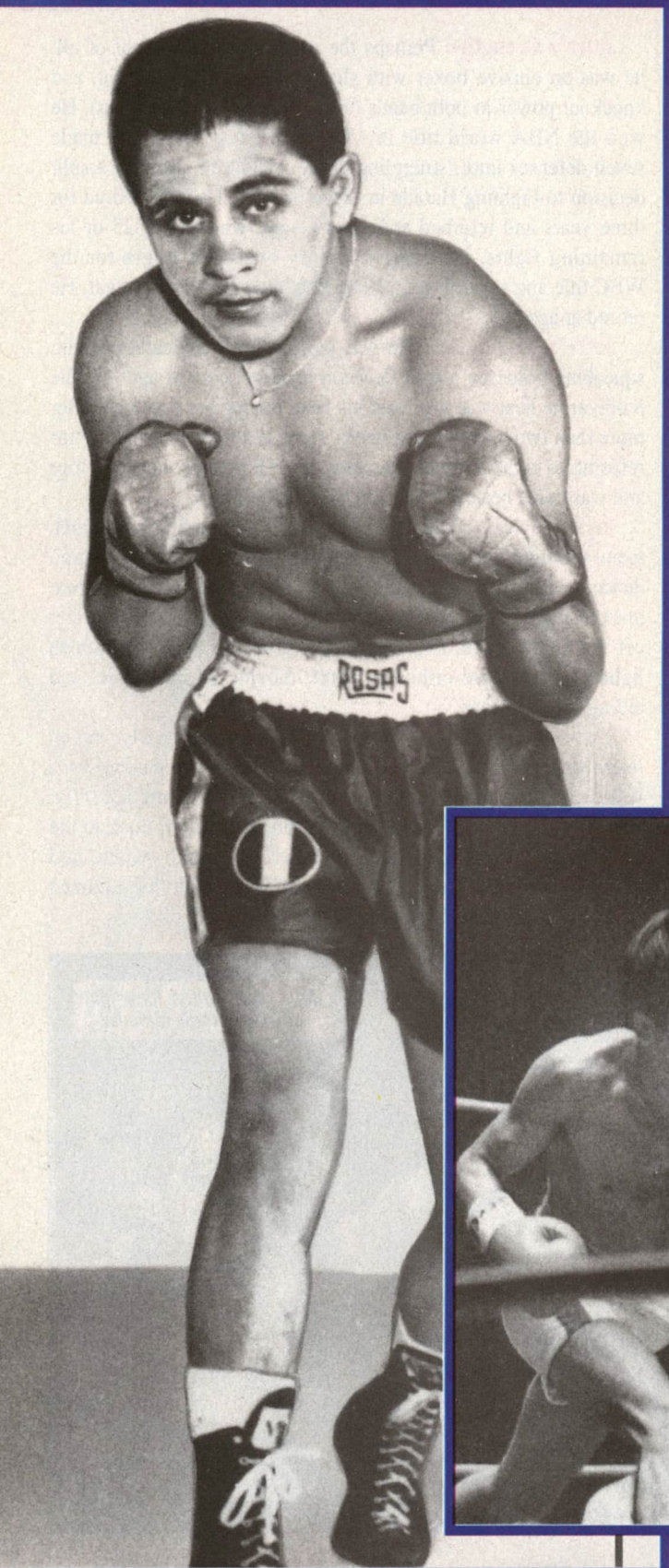
Jofre's weaknesses: He was past his peak at featherweight, squeaking home on a split decision against Legra at age 37. The Saldivar he beat was way past his best, having his first fight after more than two years of retirement. He was stripped of his title for refusing to fight Alfredo Marcano. At 118 pounds, he drew four and was twice beaten by Harada's marauding style.

Style matchup: The thick-legged, 5'3" Hamed would switch from southpaw to orthodox, twisting and turning like a limbo dancer, with his hands at his side, throwing huge punches from unexpected angles, sometimes knocking men out with both feet off the floor. Jofre, two inches taller but a couple of pounds lighter, was a more orthodox boxer, moving in and out to land telling combinations.

Outcome: Both men struggle to land cleanly early, but in round three, Hamed leaps in with a left and gets countered by a Jofre right that puts him down. He then boxes more carefully, switch-hitting to create confusion. In round six, a left hook to the chin drops Jofre. Hamed's advantages in strength, youth, and power begin to tell. He drops Jofre again with a short left in round 11, and after five more bombs, the referee waves it off.

Jofre scores with a long right against Herman Marquez

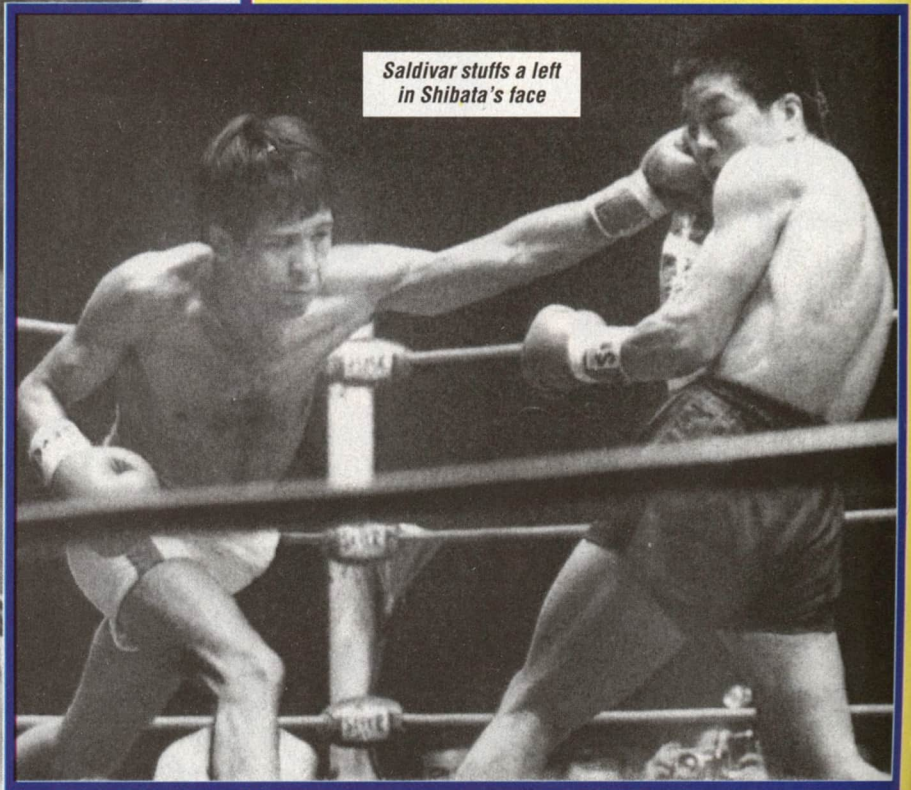
VICENTE SALDIVAR



Saldivar's strengths: Sometimes called a "pocket Marciano," this Mexican southpaw was a squat, strong, relentless bodypuncher, with a good right jab and left hook, underrated counterpunching skills, and unquenchable stamina. He won the world title at 21 by battering Sugar Ramos to a pulp and made seven defenses, including three against the highly skilled Howard Winstone. After two years' retirement, he briefly regained the WBC version. Others he beat included future lightweight champion Ismael Laguna and featherweight titlists Jose Legra and Johnny Famechon. His first loss (later avenged) came via disqualification, his second, to Kuniaki Shibata, was only his third fight in more than three years and he was hampered by cuts and a fractured cheekbone, and his third, to Eder Jofre, followed a long retirement.

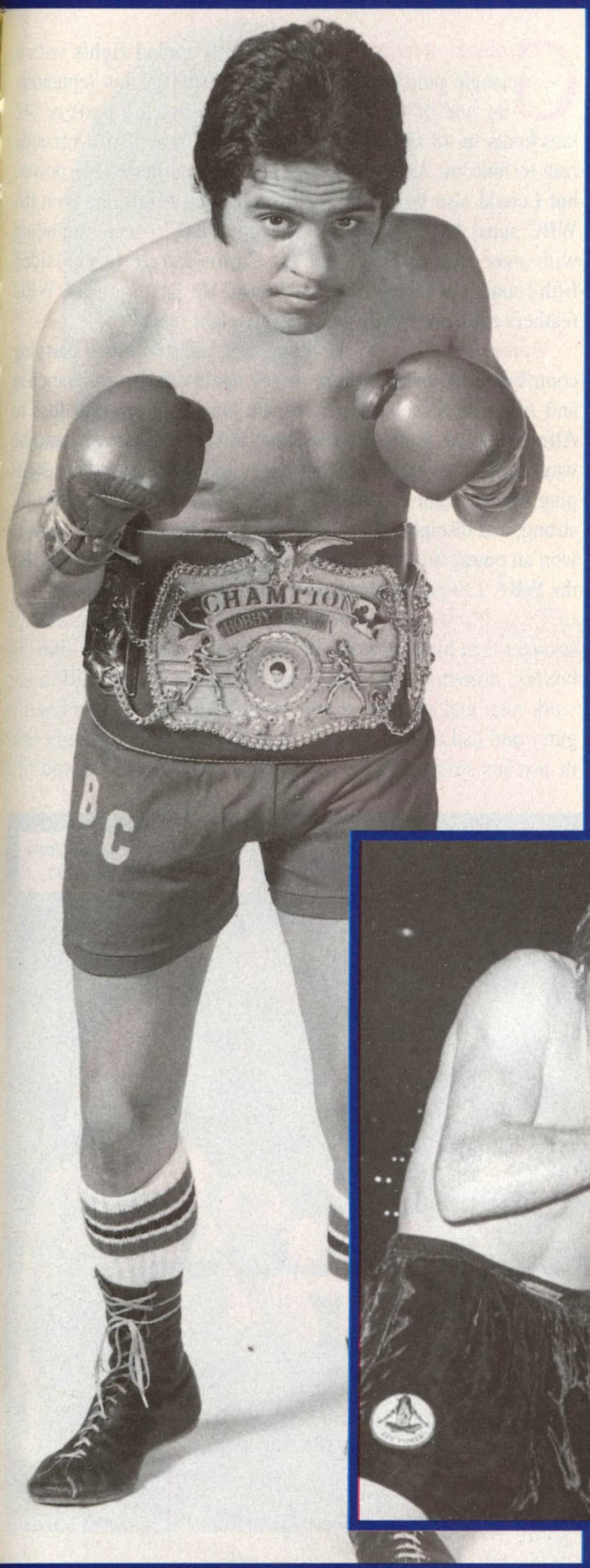
Saldivar's weaknesses: Winstone outboxed him for long spells when he was in his prime, Shibata outboxed and outpunched him until he retired in his corner at the end of round 13, and Jofre used his precision punching to beat him on a one-sided knockout in four rounds.

Chacon's strengths: One of the most exciting fighters of the modern era, his wars with Bazooka Limon, Cornelius Boza-Edwards, and Ruben Olivares were among the most compelling ever. He was a quick, extremely tenacious, two-fisted fighter with serious power, particularly in his hooks (47 knockouts in 67 fights, 70.1 percent). He won 25 of his first 27 fights inside



Saldivar stuffs a left in Shibata's face

VS. BOBBY CHACON

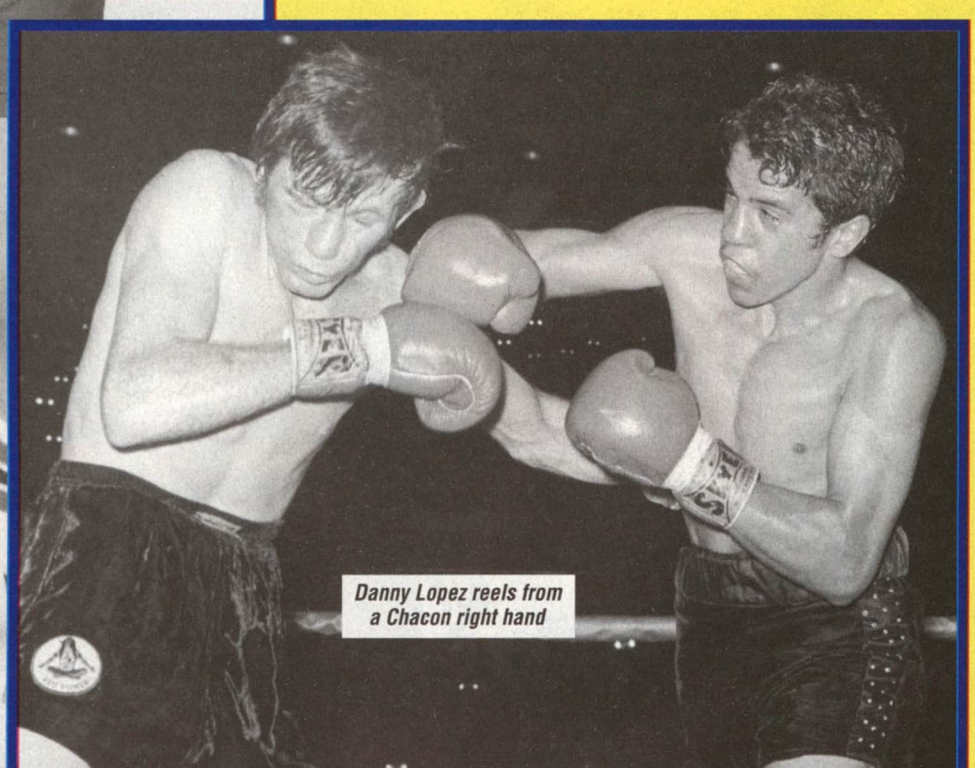


the distance, and kayoed Chucho Castillo and Danny Lopez before knocking out Alfredo Marcano to win the WBC featherweight crown. He lost it to Olivares in his second defense, but seven years later, having beaten Olivares, he outpointed Limon for the WBC super featherweight title, which he defended against Boza-Edwards. He retired at age 36.

Chacon's weaknesses: He was a party animal who became an alcoholic as world champion. His volatile lifestyle contributed to some of his losses. His face-forward style meant he took lots of punishment—stopped five times, dropped frequently, and cut regularly. A post-peak Olivares stopped him twice in three bouts, Alexis Arguello easily stopped him in seven, Boza-Edwards stopped him in 14, and Ray Mancini overwhelmed him in three.

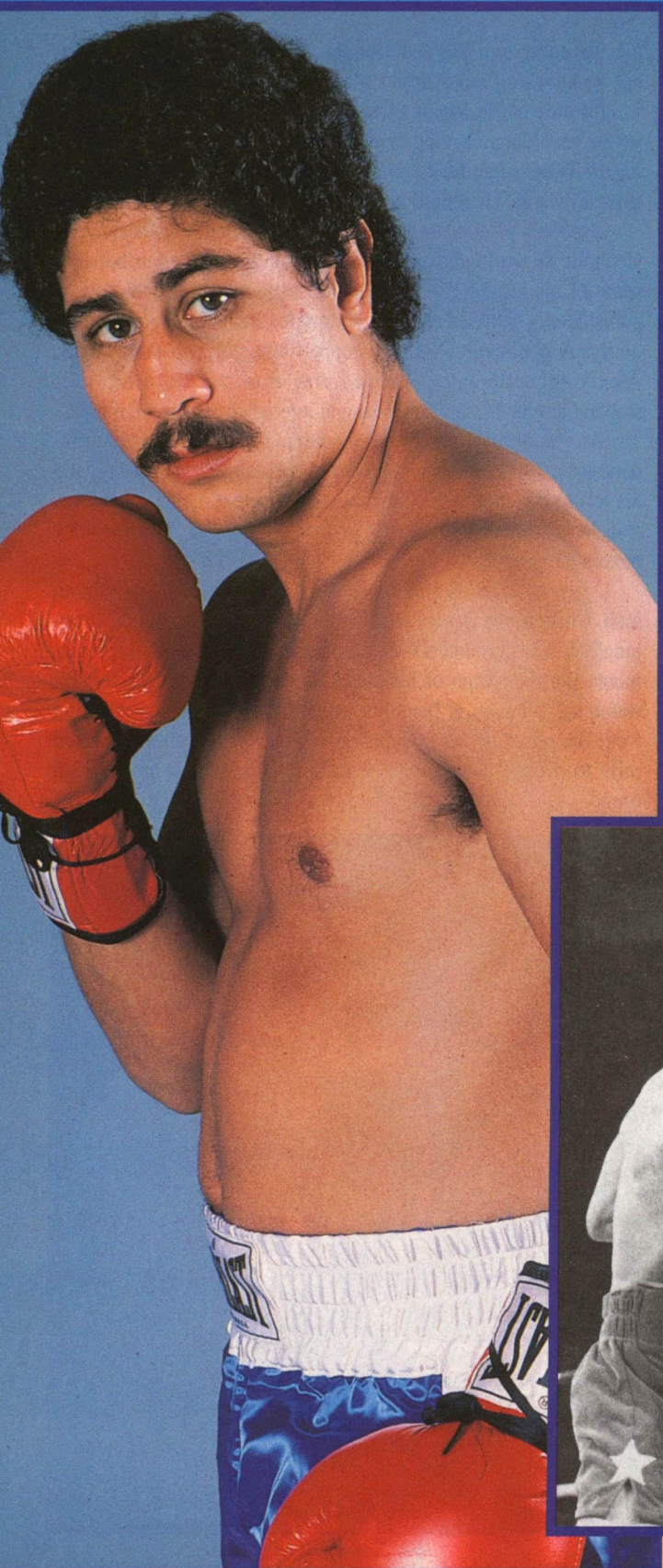
Style matchup: The broad-shouldered 5'3" Saldivar set a frenetic pace, working his way in with short-range right jabs to land his left to the short ribs. Chacon, who was two inches taller, was also an aggressive fighter, with good speed and the ability to draw boxers into brawls.

Outcome: This is an intense war with neither man giving an inch. Chacon, the harder puncher, shades the early rounds, dropping Saldivar in round six. But the Mexican continues to steam in, increasing the tempo of his attack as each round progresses. By round 12, Chacon is bleeding around the eyes and weakening from the effect of the bodypunches. Saldivar launches a fevered rally to drop Chacon, and the fight is stopped late in the 13th round.



Danny Lopez reels from a Chacon right hand

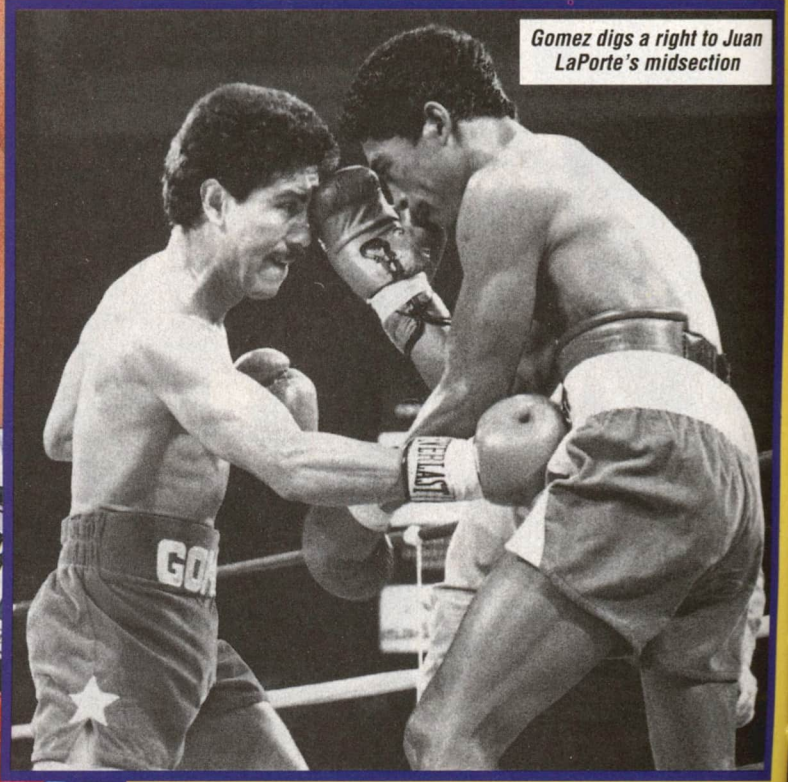
WILFREDO GOMEZ



Gomez' strengths: He frequently ended fights with a single punch from either fist, justifying his reputation as one of the hardest hitters in boxing history (42 knockouts in 48 fights, 87.5 percent). He was also a versatile ring technician. As Gomez once said, "I had incredible power, but I could also box." While still a bantamweight, he won the WBC super bantam title and defended it 17 times, including wins over Hall of Fame entrant Carlos Zarate (a one-sided fifth-round stoppage) and Lupe Pintor. He later won the WBC featherweight and WBA junior lightweight titles.

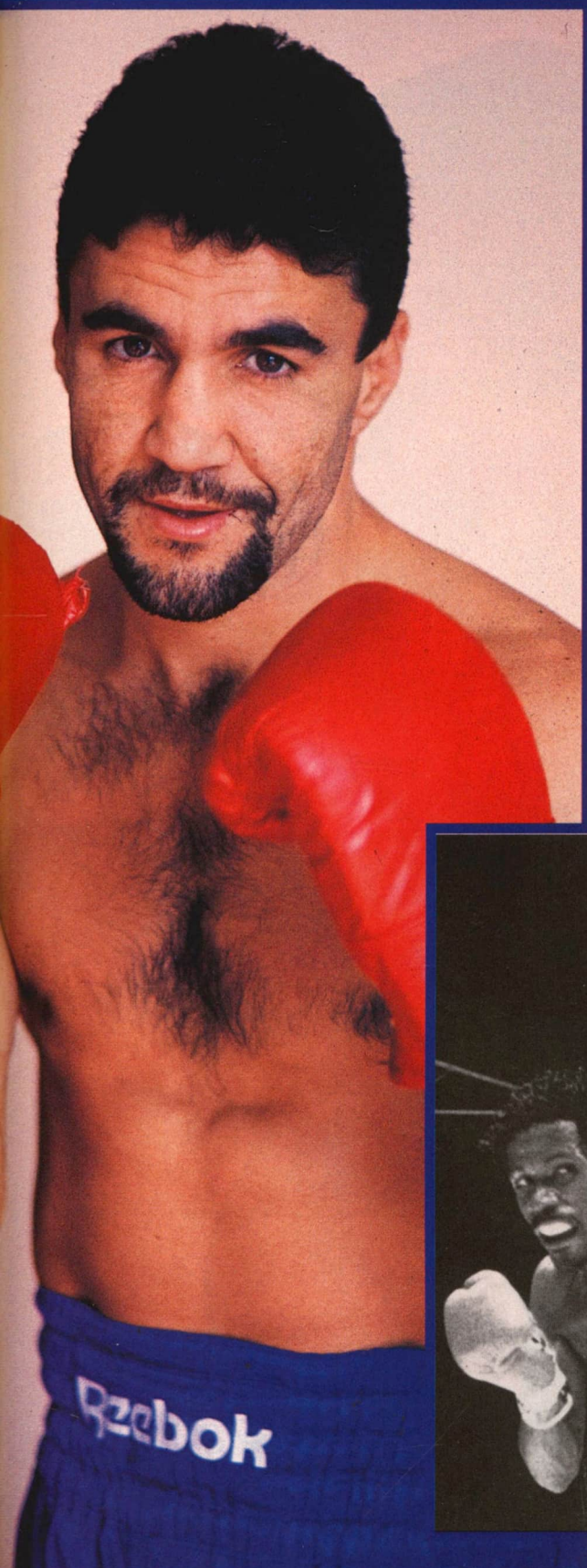
Gomez' weaknesses: Undertraining and too much partying contributed to featherweight losses against Salvador Sanchez and Azumah Nelson, as well as his junior lightweight loss to Alfredo Layne. Each of these came inside the distance, and he was dropped several times. Sanchez outboxed him before stopping him in eight one-sided rounds, while Nelson was too fit, strong, and disciplined for him, knocking him out in 11. Gomez won an outrageous majority decision over Rocky Lockridge for the WBA 130-pound title before getting stopped by Layne.

Fenech's strengths: A huge junior featherweight, always stronger than his opponents, he could close down quick-moving boxers, drawing them into a brawl, where his conditioning, work rate, and strength would prevail. He was extraordinarily gutsy and had a great chin. He won the IBF bantamweight title in just his seventh fight. After three defenses, he moved up,



Gomez digs a right to Juan LaPorte's midsection

VS. JEFF FENECH

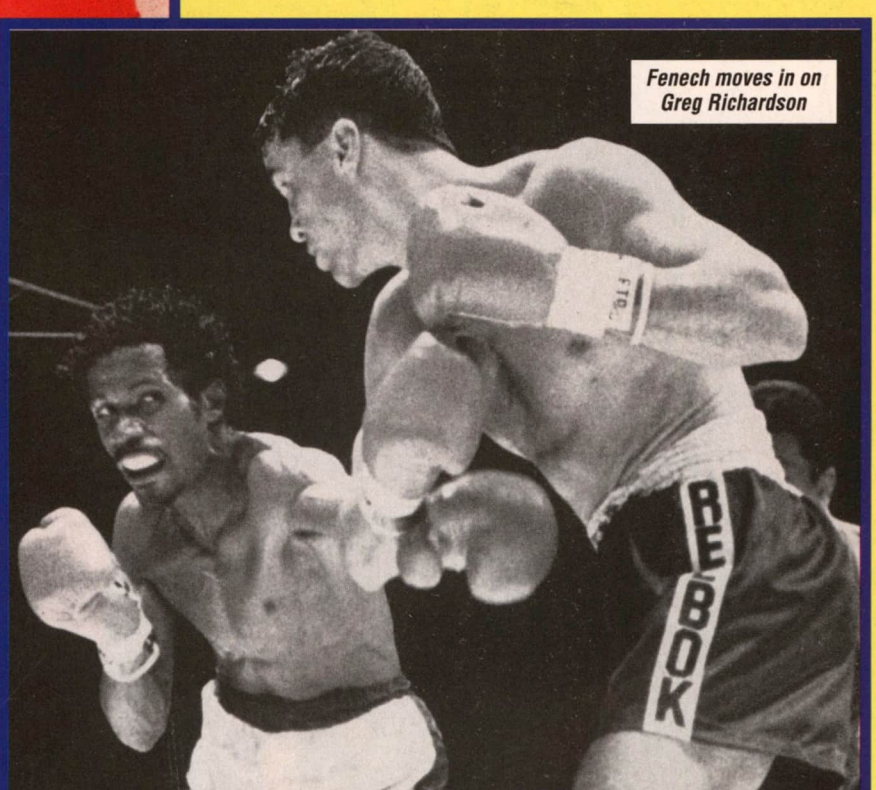


whipped Daniel Zaragoza, and then lifted the WBC 122-pound crown. After two defenses, he moved up again and won the WBC featherweight title, making three defenses. He should have gotten the decision in robbery draw with Nelson for the WBC super featherweight title.

Fenech's weaknesses: He had brittle hands, causing him intense pain. Despite a 65.6 percent kayo ratio, he did not have great one-punch knockout power and was not the most skilled defensive boxer either. Nelson (who was suffering the after-effects of a malaria attack in their first bout) used his boxing skill and power to TKO Fenech in eight rounds in their return, after which the Aussie was never the same again, suffering two more stoppage losses.

Style matchup: The 5'5" Gomez was a classic boxer-puncher who could work at any range and was always dangerous with his hooks and crosses. The 5'8" Fenech used his strength to crowd opponents and his fitness to outlast them.

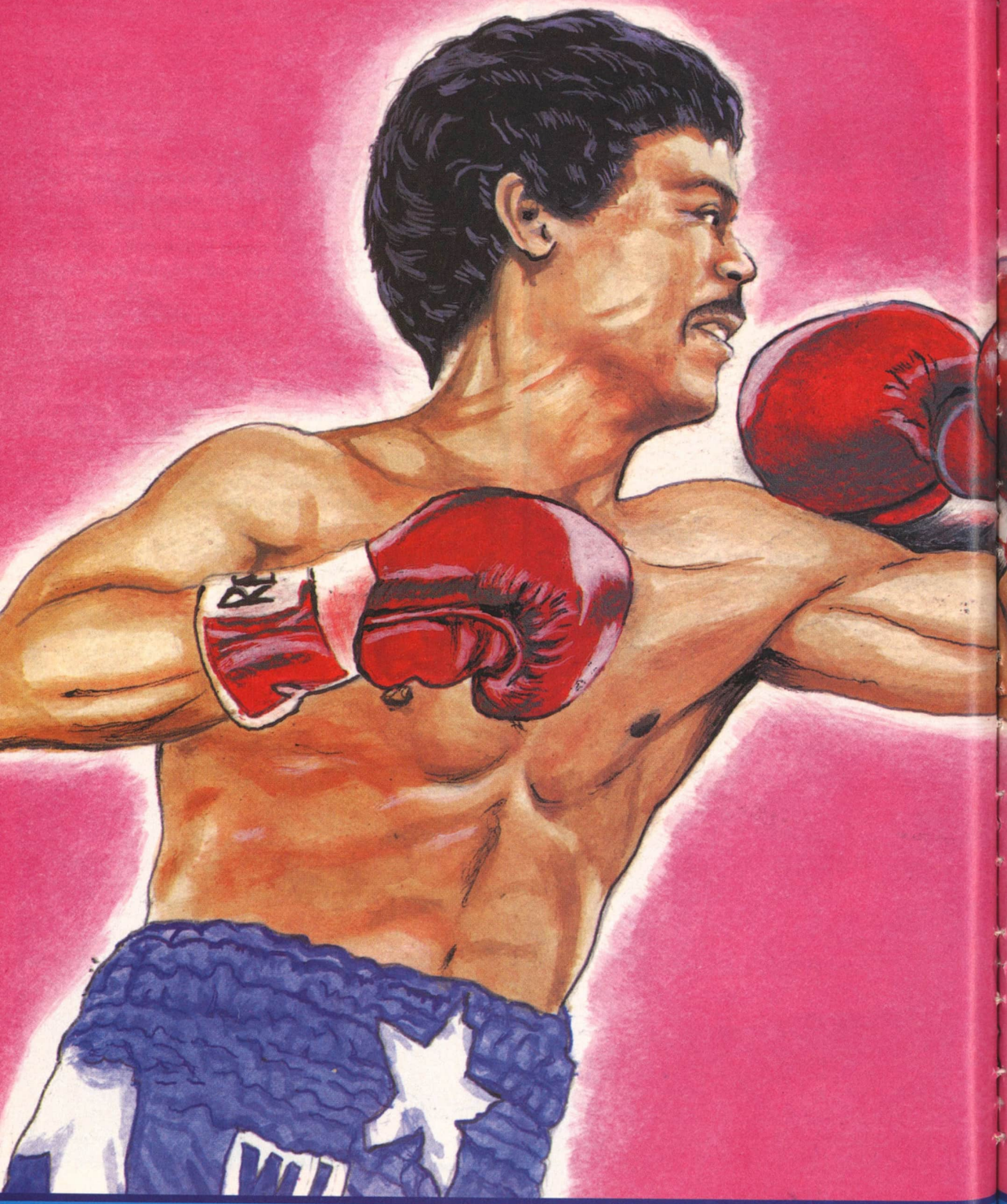
Outcome: This fight presents a stylistic paradox: Fenech, the taller man, works up close, while Gomez, the heavier hitter, boxes at longer range. This makes for an intense duel featuring the Australian's greater strength, fitness, and endurance against the Puerto Rican's sharper boxing and harder punching. Fenech's higher work rate chips into Gomez' lead in the later rounds, but in round 14 he is dropped by a left hook, which is enough to give Gomez a majority decision.

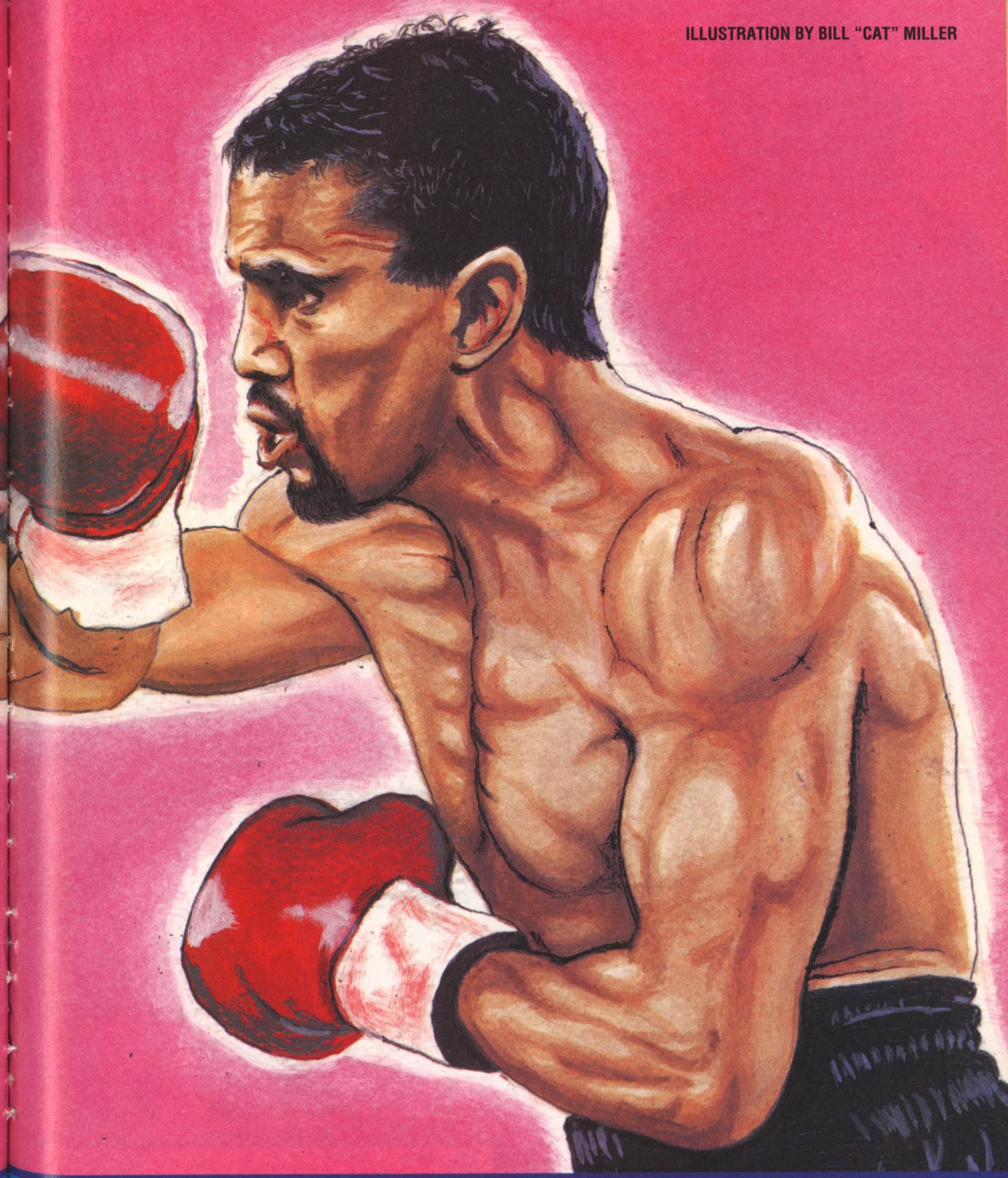


Fenech moves in on Greg Richardson

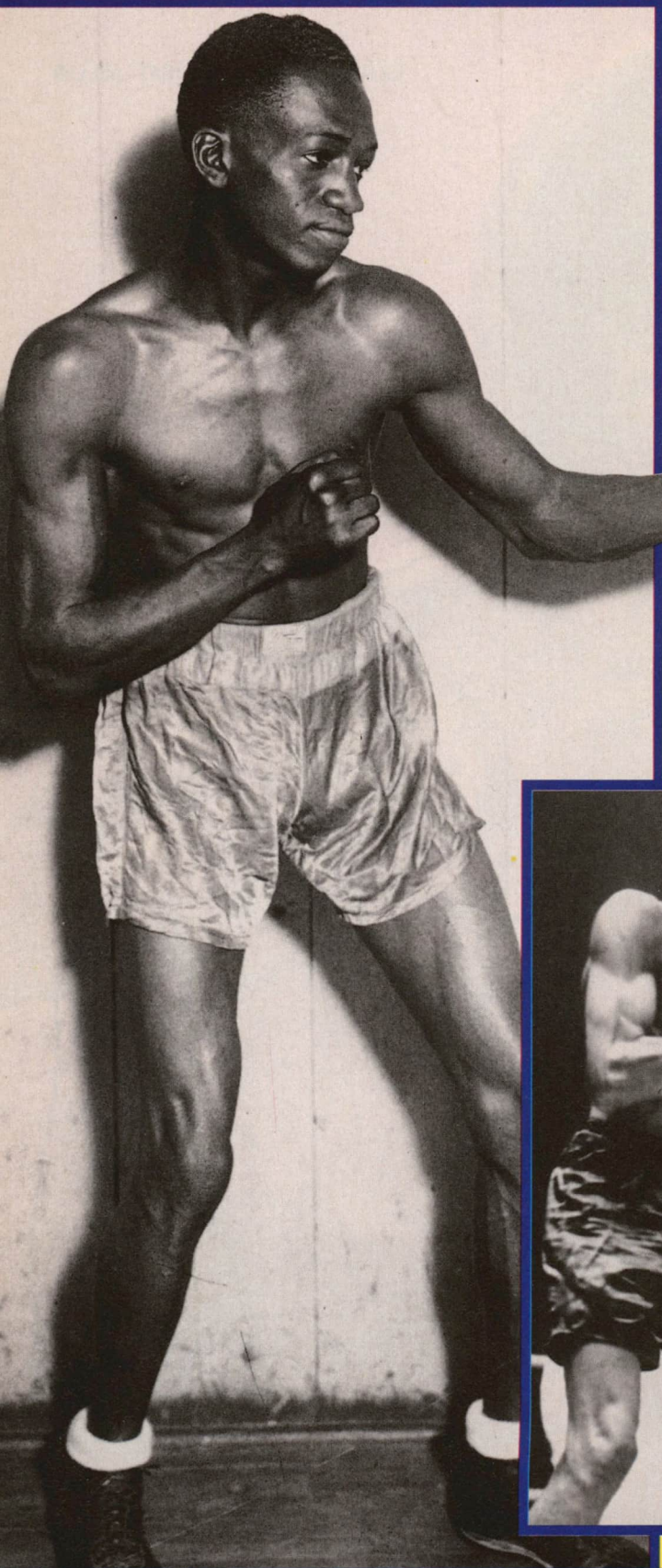
WILFREDO GOMEZ vs. JEFF FENECH

ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER





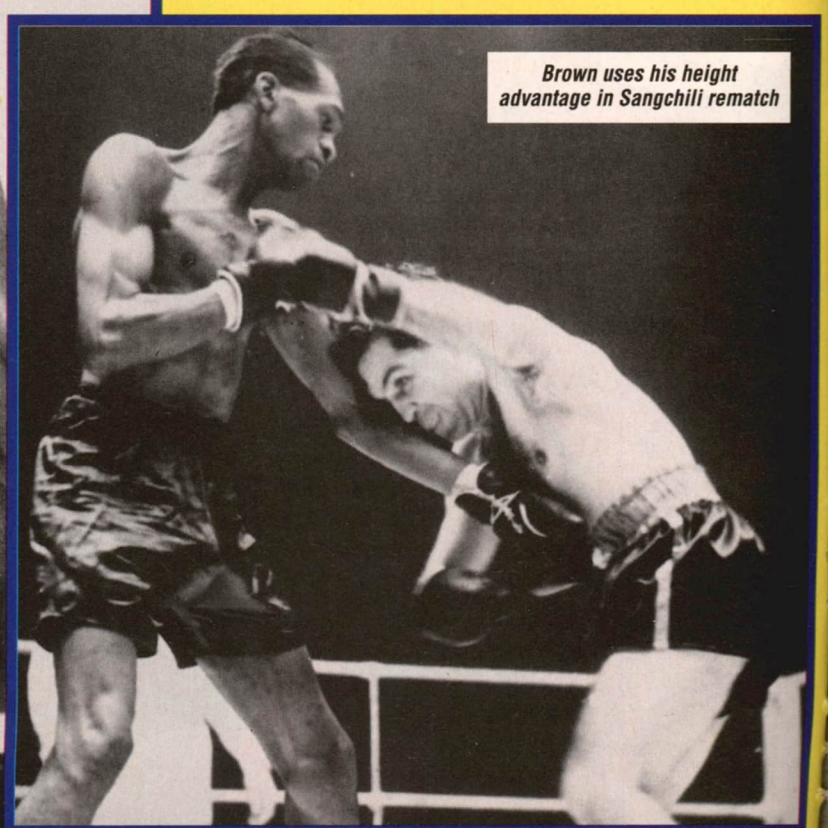
PANAMA AL BROWN



Brown's strengths: The tallest-ever bantamweight champion (5'11"), Brown used his 76-inch reach to outbox smaller men. Despite being so thin, he was extremely tough, never getting stopped in 162 recorded fights. He was a clever defensive boxer with fine footwork, a quick left jab, and a sharp right cross. He won the vacant bantamweight title by outboxing Vidal Gregorio, after which he fought all over the world, making nine successful defenses during a six-year reign before losing it on points to Baltazar Sangchili, when he was almost 33 years old, in his 145th fight. He later avenged that defeat, and retired aged 40.

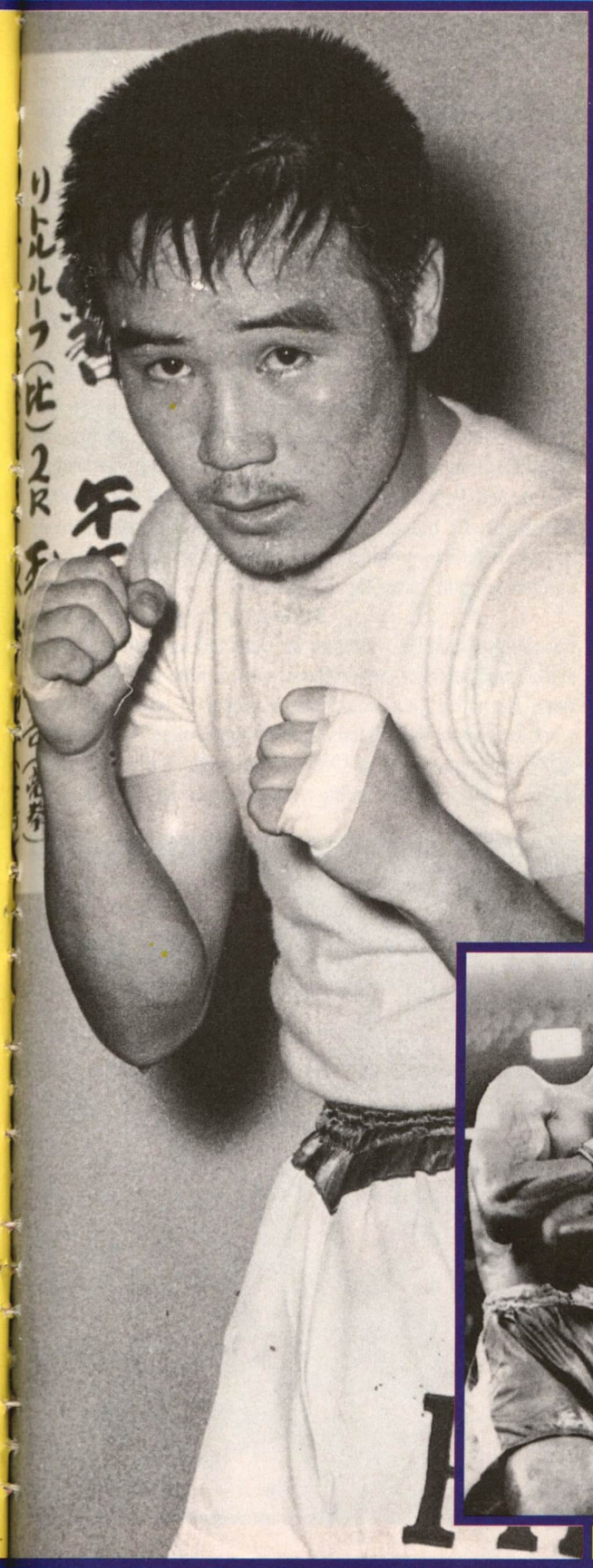
Brown's weaknesses: He was not particularly strong, regularly losing to featherweights (although he outpointed former 126-pound champion Eugene Criqui). He had decent power, but was not a huge puncher (35.8 percent kayo rate; only one of 10 title fight victories came by knockout). At his peak, he scraped home on a disputed majority decision against bodypuncher Pete Sanstol and was well beaten in the non-title return.

Harada's strengths: A human windmill who overwhelmed opponents with his marauding attacks, he was an outstanding bodypuncher whose bobbing-and-weaving style made him hard to tag. He also had a sound chin. He was only 19 when he won



Brown uses his height advantage in Sangchili rematch

Vs. FIGHTING HARADA

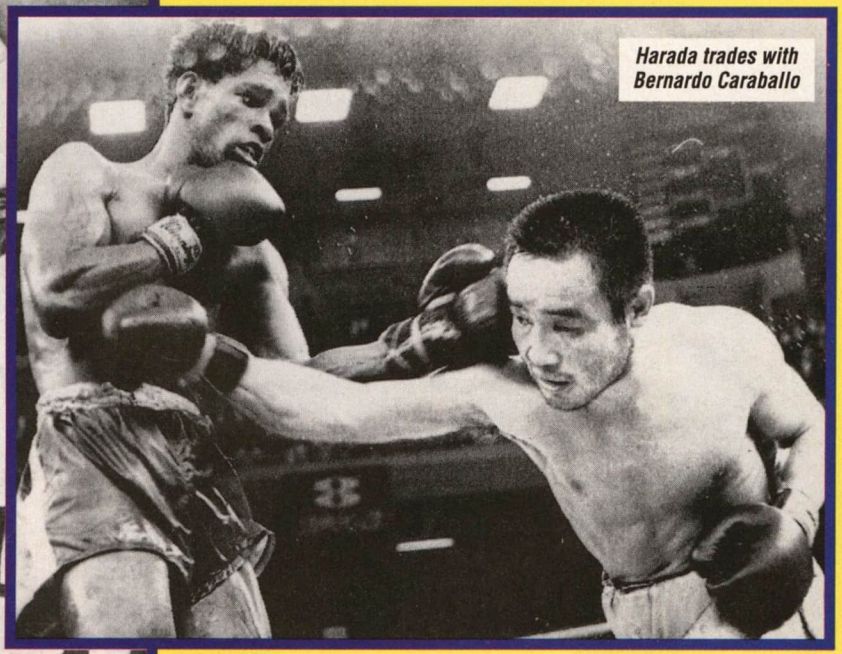


the world flyweight title by knocking out rangy Pone Kingpetch in 11 vicious rounds—his 28th win in 28 fights—but lost the return on a majority decision, after which he moved to bantamweight, beating Eder Jofre for the title. He made four defenses over the next three years, including a second win over Jofre. He later challenged Johnny Famechon for the WBC featherweight title, dropping him three times, only to be declared the loser by the sole judge, referee Willie Pep (who initially called it a draw).

Harada's weaknesses: He had trouble with taller boxers who could combine speed and sharp punching. The 5'6" Kingpetch used aggressive jabbing to force the action and win the decision in their rematch. The 5'6" Lionel Rose took the bantamweight title with quick, hard punching and long-range boxing. The 5'6" Famechon used his quick footwork and sharp jab to outbox Harada in their return, stopping him in the 14th round. He was not a big puncher at the elite level, with just 22 knockouts in 62 fights (35.5 percent) and none of his six bantamweight title fights ended inside the distance.

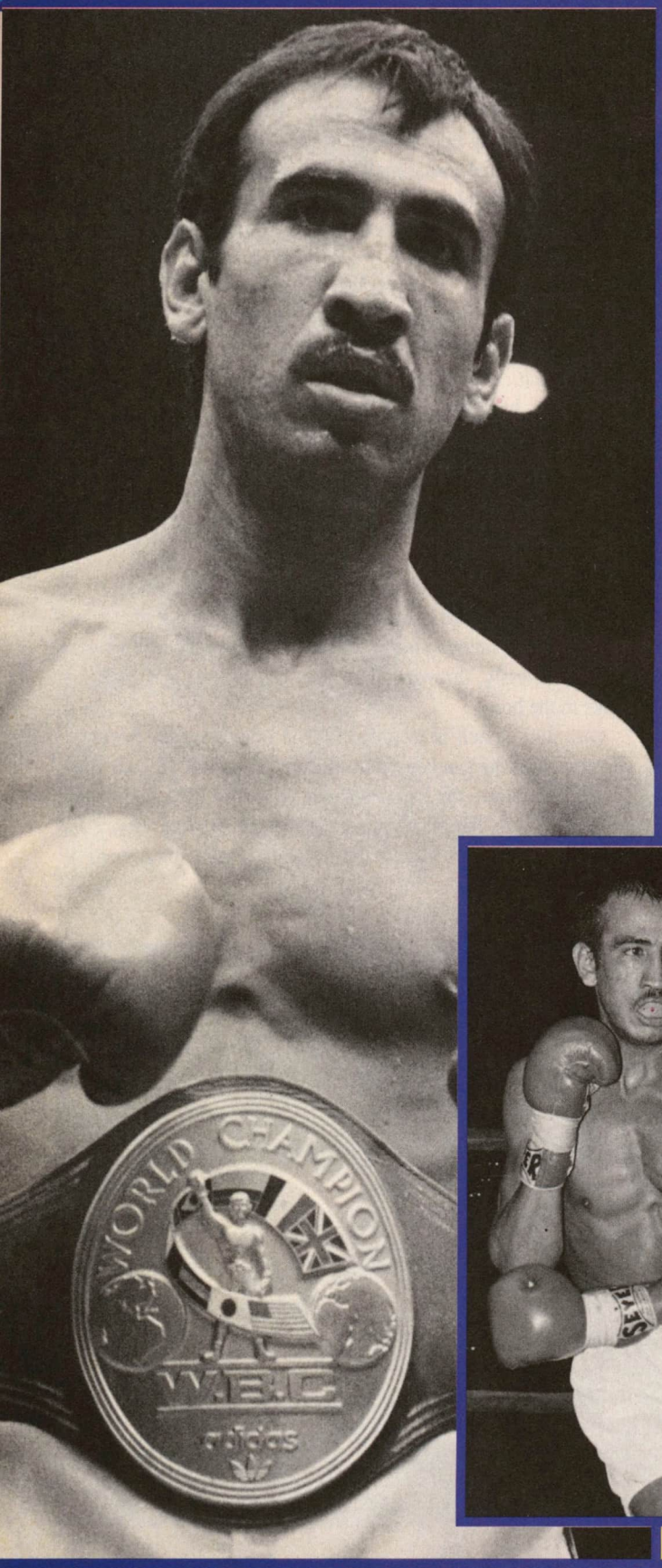
Style matchup: Brown boxed from long range behind his accurate jab, using his excellent footwork to move out of trouble. Harada, eight inches shorter, was a close-range fighter who worked tirelessly, throwing short jabs and crosses and plenty of hooks to the body.

Outcome: Each is troubled by the other's style. Brown is effective when he can keep control from behind his jab, but when Harada gets close, the Panamanian struggles to keep him off. In the later rounds, the greater strength and higher work rate of the Japanese hero begins to tell, and he scrapes home on a majority decision.



Harada trades with Bernardo Caraballo

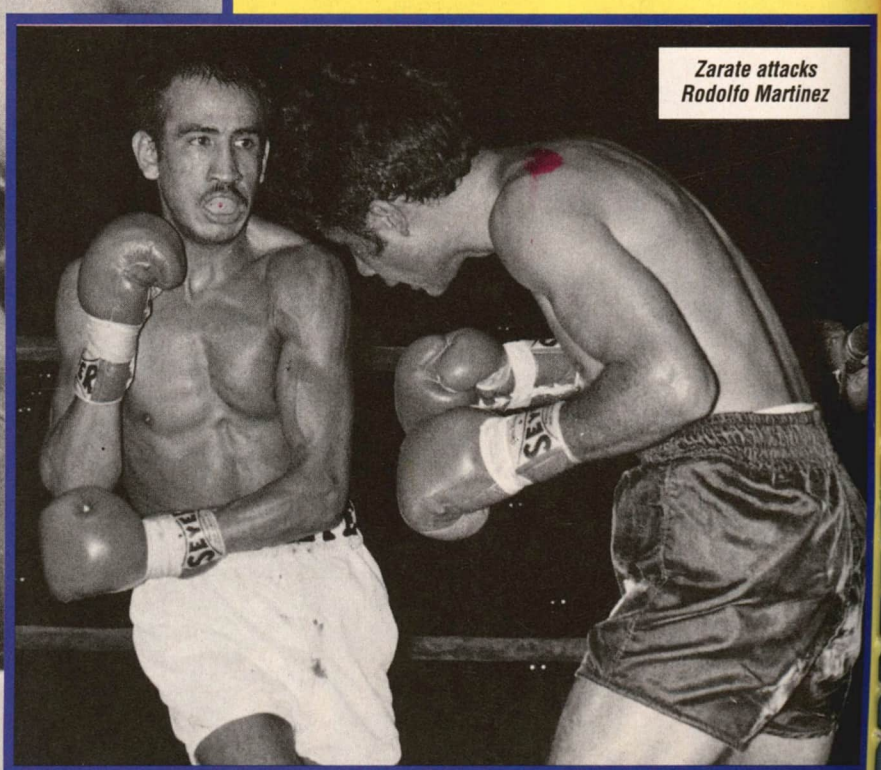
CARLOS ZARATE



Zarate's strengths: He was one of the hardest hitters of all-time (58 knockouts in 65 fights; 89.2 percent) with an immense right cross, a huge left hook, and a vicious uppercut. He also used a busy jab to create openings and had good hand speed. He won his first 47 bouts (46 via kayo), stopping Rodolfo Martinez for the WBC bantamweight belt, which he defended nine times over three years, until getting robbed against Lupe Pintor. He also beat reigning WBA 118-pound ruler Alfonso Zamora in four rounds to win recognition as undisputed champion prior to Pintor rip-off.

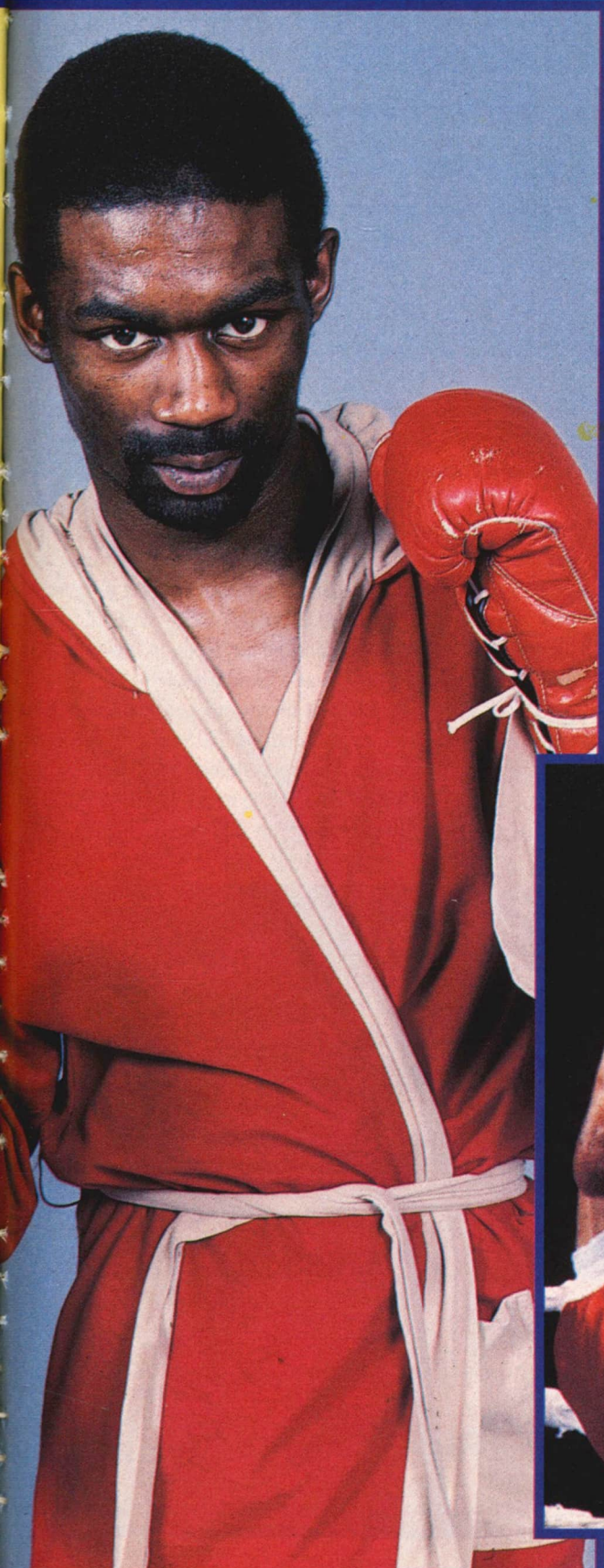
Zarate's weaknesses: He did not have the physical strength or chin to compete in higher divisions. When he stepped up to junior feather, he was dropped four times and stopped by Wilfredo Gomez, and at the end of his career, he was outmuscled by Jeff Fenech and stopped in 10 by Daniel Zaragoza. He wasn't exactly quick footed, which meant that faster-moving boxers sometimes troubled him. Gomez, for instance, not only outpunched him, but outboxed him too.

Chandler's strengths: Known for his pinpoint counterpunching, Chandler was both an outstanding technical boxer and a good puncher (seven kayo wins in nine title fight victories). He had a long, sharp jab, a powerful uppercut, a high work rate, and a tight defense. He stopped Julian Solis in 14 for the WBA bantam title in 1980 and defended it nine times over the next 3½ years, including victories over former titleholder



Zarate attacks Rodolfo Martinez

VS. JEFF CHANDLER

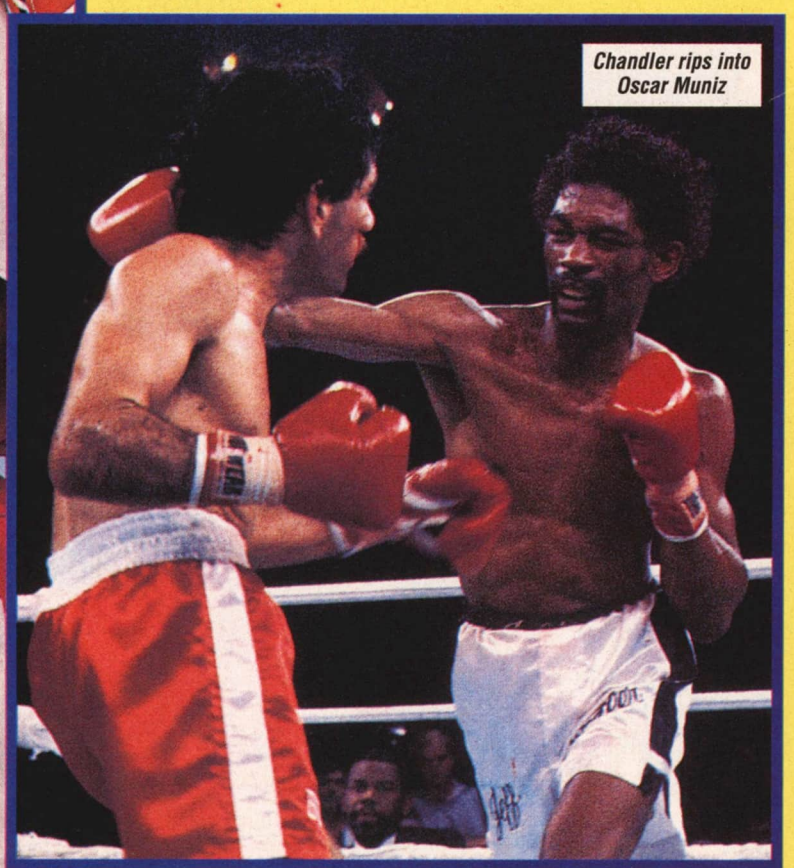


Jorge Lujan and future titlist Gaby Canizales. Suffering from cataracts, he retired at age 27.

Chandler's weaknesses: His lack of amateur experience (two bouts) meant he took a while to reach his peak, which didn't last long because his cataract troubles started in '82. Weighing just 115 pounds, he was held to a draw by Eijiro Murata in a title fight in Japan in '81 (but twice beat Murata in return fights), and poor conditioning cost him his non-title fight against Oscar Muniz in 1983 (although he stopped Muniz in seven when the title was at stake). He was battered to defeat by Richie Sandoval in the 15th round in '84 and never fought again.

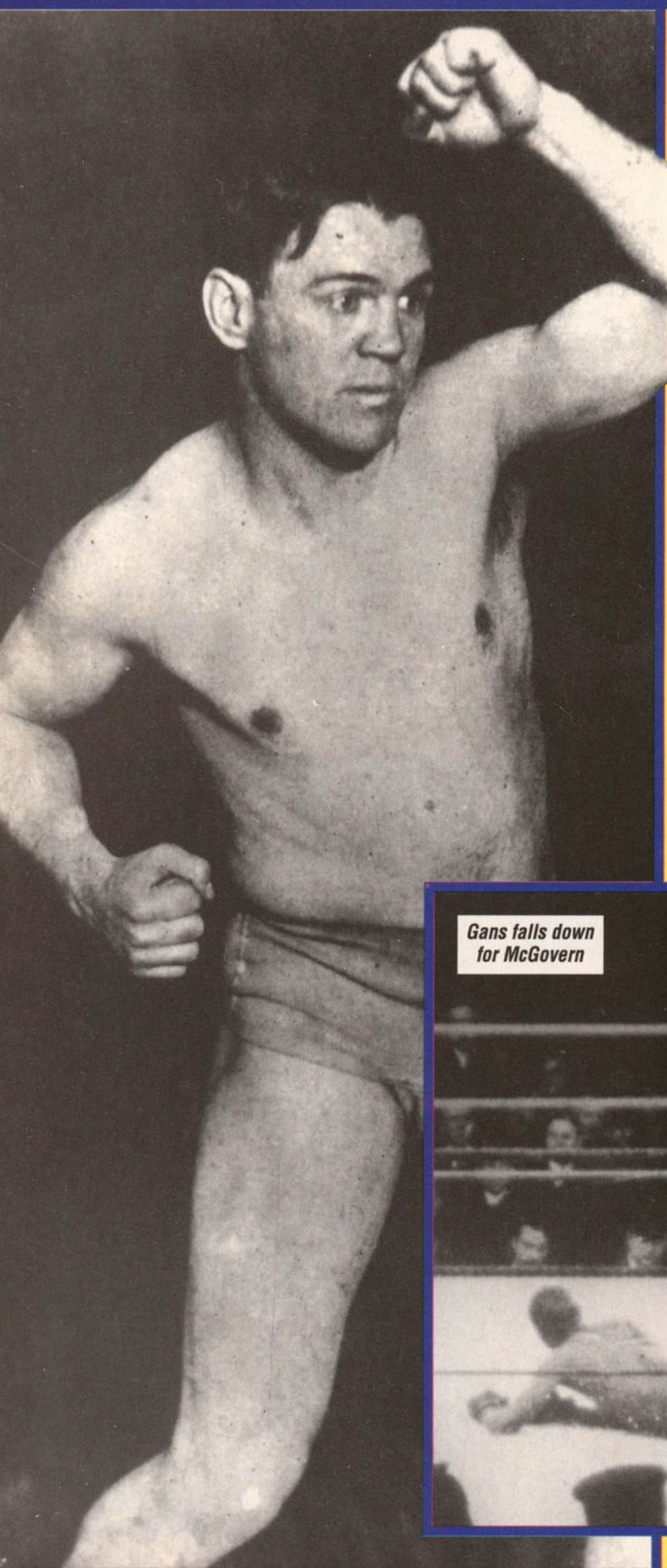
Style matchup: The 5'8" Zarate would stalk his opponents and strike with astonishing efficiency and power. Chandler, about half an inch shorter but with a 72-inch reach, liked to counter-punch from outside, but he was also a good bodypuncher who could work well up close when required.

Outcome: Chandler uses his speed to keep out of trouble, picking up points with his long jab and quick countering rights. In round six, Chandler drops Zarate with a peach of an uppercut, but as he moves in after the count, the Mexican snaps the American's head back with his own uppercut and then closes the show with a left hook-right cross combination.



Chandler rips into Oscar Muniz

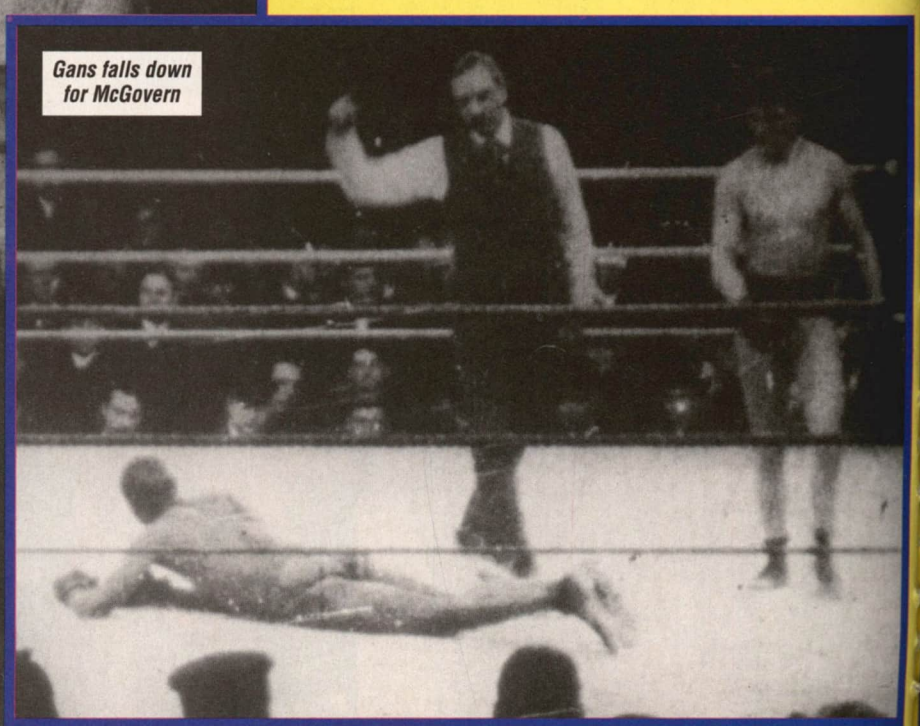
TERRY McGOVERN



McGovern's strengths: He was a terrific puncher who mounted whirlwind attacks—extremely quick and aggressive. His pet blow was a right to the heart, and he also had a heavy left hook (42 knockouts in 78 fights, 53.8 percent). He seemed impervious to punishment at his peak. He won the world bantamweight title at 19 by knocking out jab-and-move Pedlar Palmer in one round, and four months later stopped George Dixon for the featherweight title, as part of a run of 18 straight knockouts, 14 in the first three rounds. He made six title defenses at featherweight and also stopped reigning world lightweight champion Frank Erne in three rounds in a non-title bout. He lost just one of his first 62 fights (on disqualification), with 39 knockouts.

McGovern's weaknesses: He was a comet who flared brightly but burnt out quickly, partly because of his lifestyle, but also because of his face-first fighting style. He relied on his power, but was crude and wild, without a tight defense. He was still 21 when Young Corbett II knocked him out in the second round, and he was knocked out again in the return. His win over Joe Gans in 1900 was a fixed fight.

Ortiz' strengths: Look at his record and you get a sense of his worth: two title reigns totalling 7½ years, 19 successful defenses, and five world champions defeated. Ortiz was a consummate pressure fighter with all the tricks of the trade. He hit adequately hard (49 knockouts in 127 bouts, 38.6 percent,



Gans falls down for McGovern

vs. MANUEL ORTIZ

many above bantamweight), and took a very good punch. He won the world 118-pound title in 1942 as part of a run of 46 fights when his only loss came against Willie Pep. After 15 defenses (10 kayos) he lost it to Harold Dade in '46, but regained it two months later and made four more defenses, finally getting outpointed by Vic Toweel, in his 115th fight, in high-altitude Johannesburg, when he was almost 34.

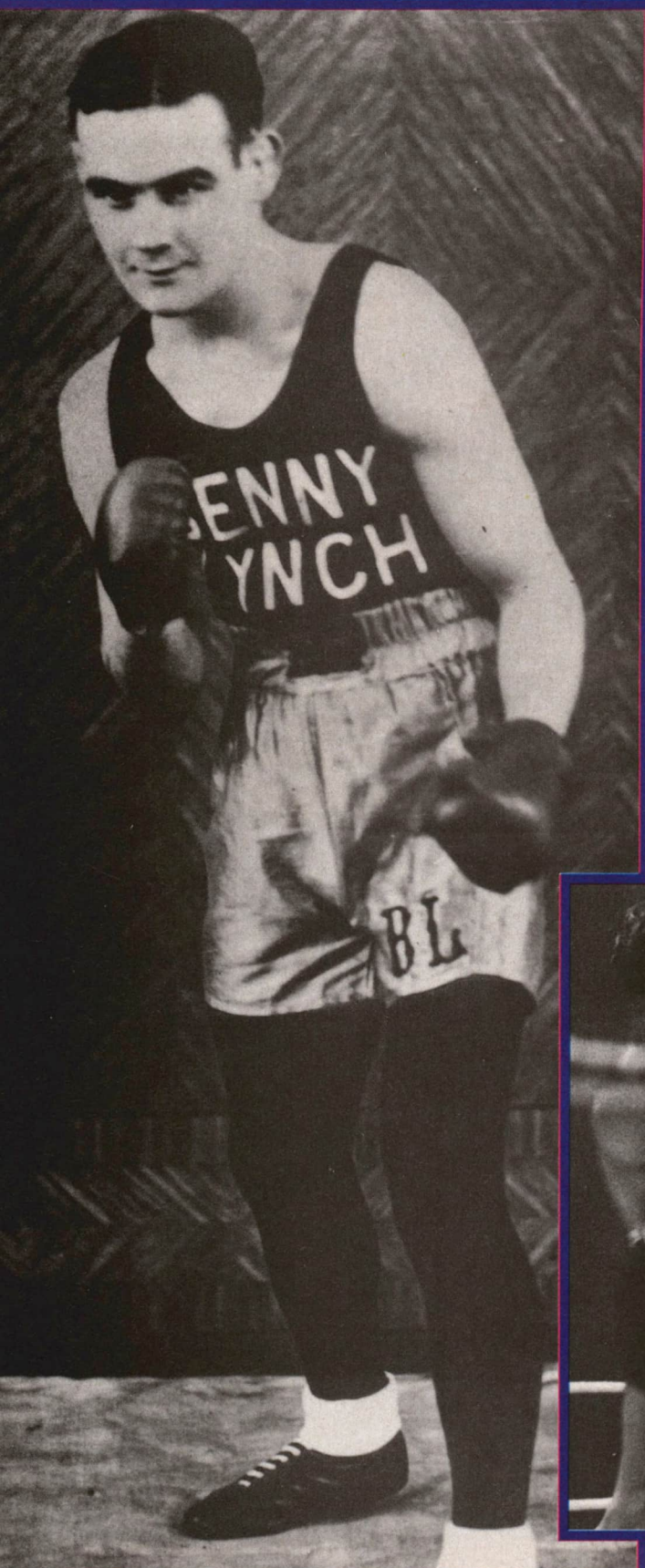
Ortiz' weaknesses: He was a good all-rounder, but was neither a devastating puncher nor a defensive genius. His dedication was inconsistent, particularly during his second reign, which meant that he sometimes faltered when the title wasn't on-line (nine non-title losses over the two reigns).

Style matchup: The 5'4" McGovern fought from a crouch and applied constant pressure, throwing hooks and short rights to the body as he went for the knockout. Ortiz, also 5'4", was a swarmer who used his jab to good effect and threw clusters of hard hooks and crosses.

Outcome: "Terrible Terry" charges out in a bid to pulverize Ortiz, dropping him with a right to the body and a left to the chin. But the Mexican-American survives and gets to work, landing sharp counters, and constantly beating the Irish-American to the punch. By the later rounds, McGovern is still dangerous, but is starting to weaken, and in the 13th Ortiz wounds him with an uppercut and then knocks him out with a left hook.

Ortiz belts Dado Marino in the mouth

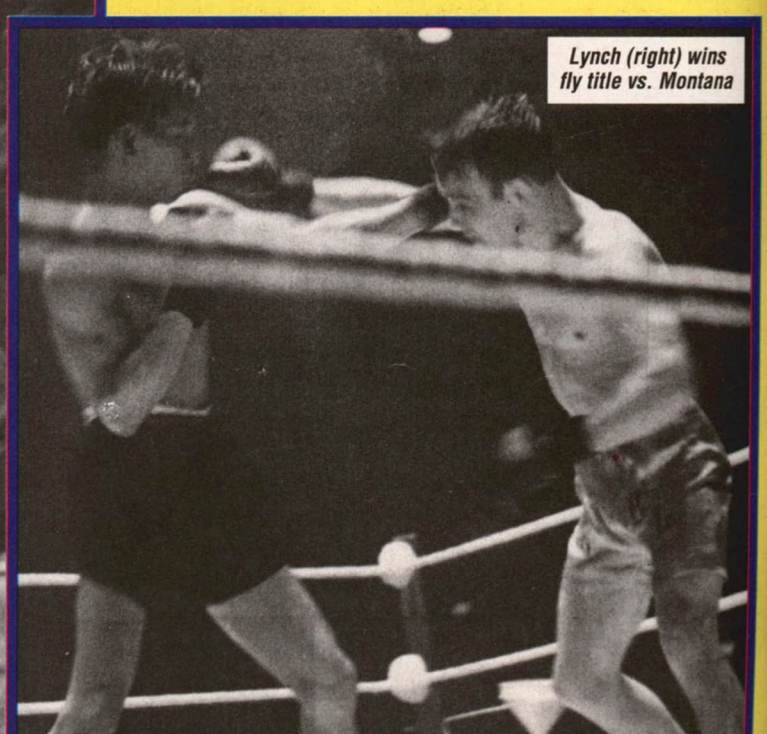
BENNY LYNCH



Lynch's strengths: A brilliant fighter—quick, elusive with extremely fast hands, a hard chin, and a huge heart. He also hit hard, ending four of six title fights early. He won the NBA flyweight title in 1935, stopping Jackie Brown in two rounds, dropping him six times. Sixteen months later, he outpointed rival claimant Small Montana to win universal recognition (following a streak of six straight knockouts). He made three other title defenses, including an 11th-round knockout of future world champion Peter Kane, before losing the title on the scales (prior to stopping another future title claimant, Jackie Jurich, in 12 rounds, dropping him six times). Lynch, who averaged 16 fights a year, had one run when he went unbeaten in 39 bouts.

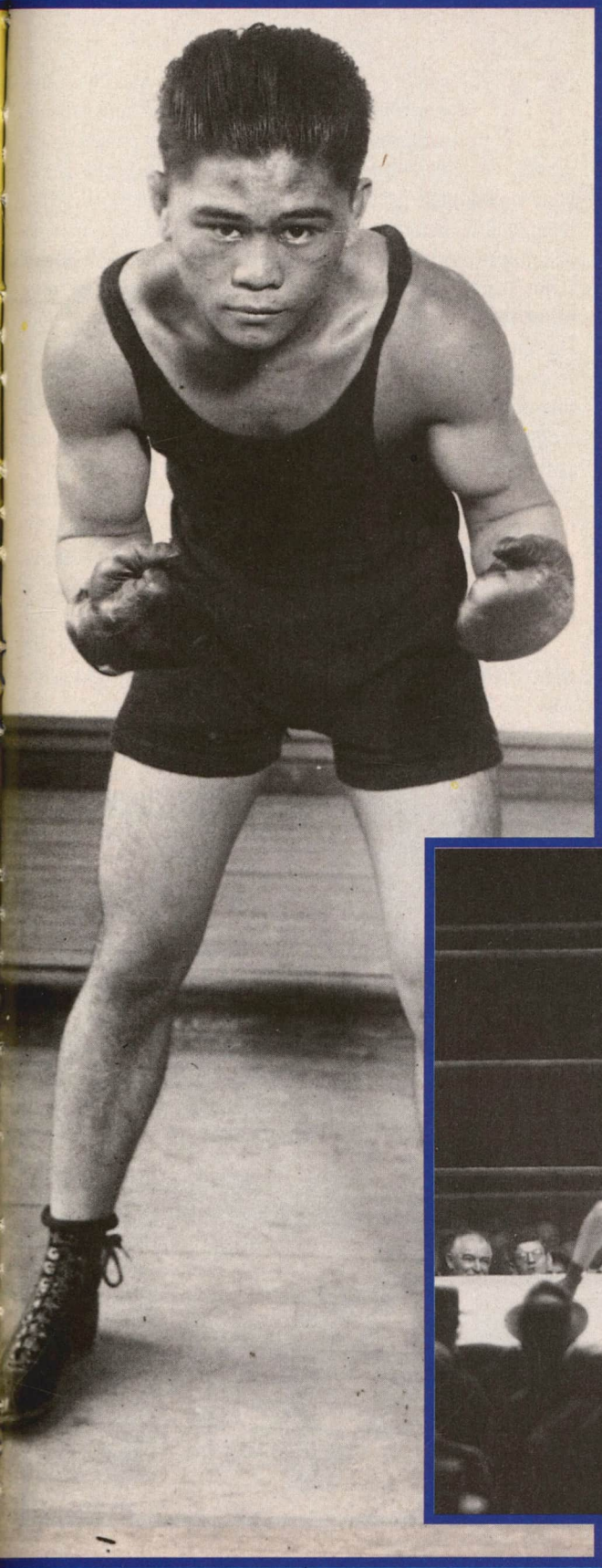
Lynch's weaknesses: He was an alcoholic whose drinking prompted a premature decline. He began losing non-title fights, and vacated the title after coming in six pounds overweight against Jurich. He won just five of his last nine bouts and retired aged 25. Lynch only once fought outside of Scotland or England (losing in Ireland).

Villa's strengths: He was a quick, aggressive, and clever boxer-fighter with a stinging jab, sound bob-and-weave defensive skills, and a rock-solid chin (never stopped in 107 fights). He was exceptionally strong and had decent power, as displayed when he knocked out Johnny Buff in 11 rounds for the U.S. title and then brutally dispatched Jimmy Wilde in seven rounds in 1923 to win the world championship. He defended it



Lynch (right) wins fly title vs. Montana

VS. PANCHO VILLA

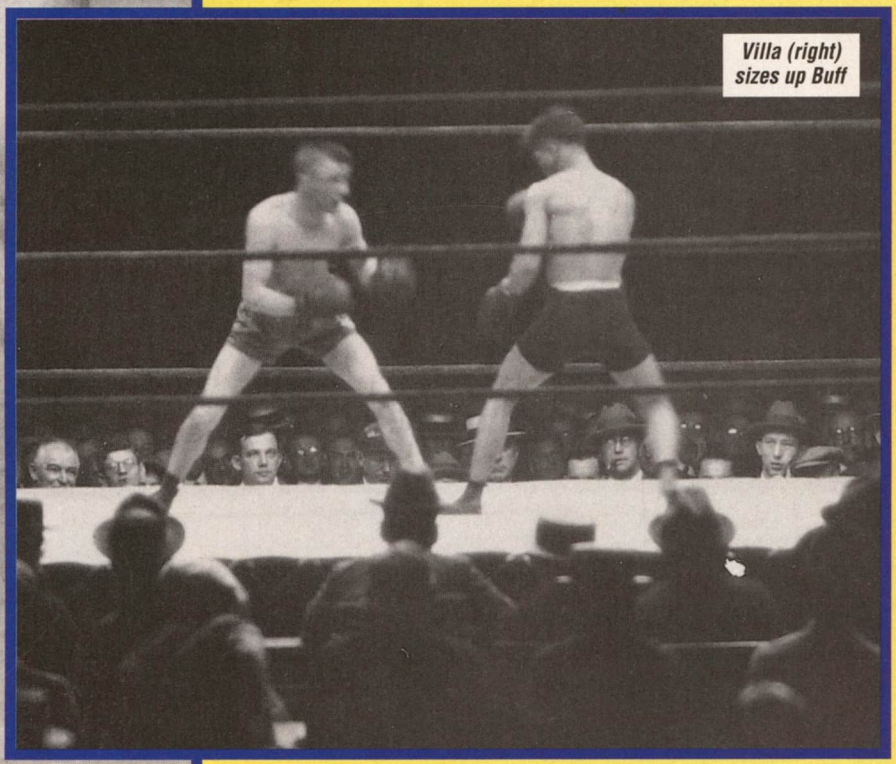


three times and died as champion, through the spread of infection from an ulcerated tooth, following a non-title loss against Jimmy McLarnin.

Villa's weaknesses: He occasionally struggled with strong boxers who could punch. He was bettered three times at his peak by future world flyweight champion Frankie Genaro (one of them a no-decision) and once by a 17-year-old McLarnin (then a bantamweight), and was also troubled by the skilled Abe Goldstein (unofficially losing their first, no-decision bout). The Wilde he beat was four years past his best (and Villa was helped by flooring him after the bell ended round two). His wild ways contributed to his death (he chose to party for a week rather than returning to the dentist). He won only 23 fights on stoppages, 21.5 percent, and each of his title defenses went the distance.

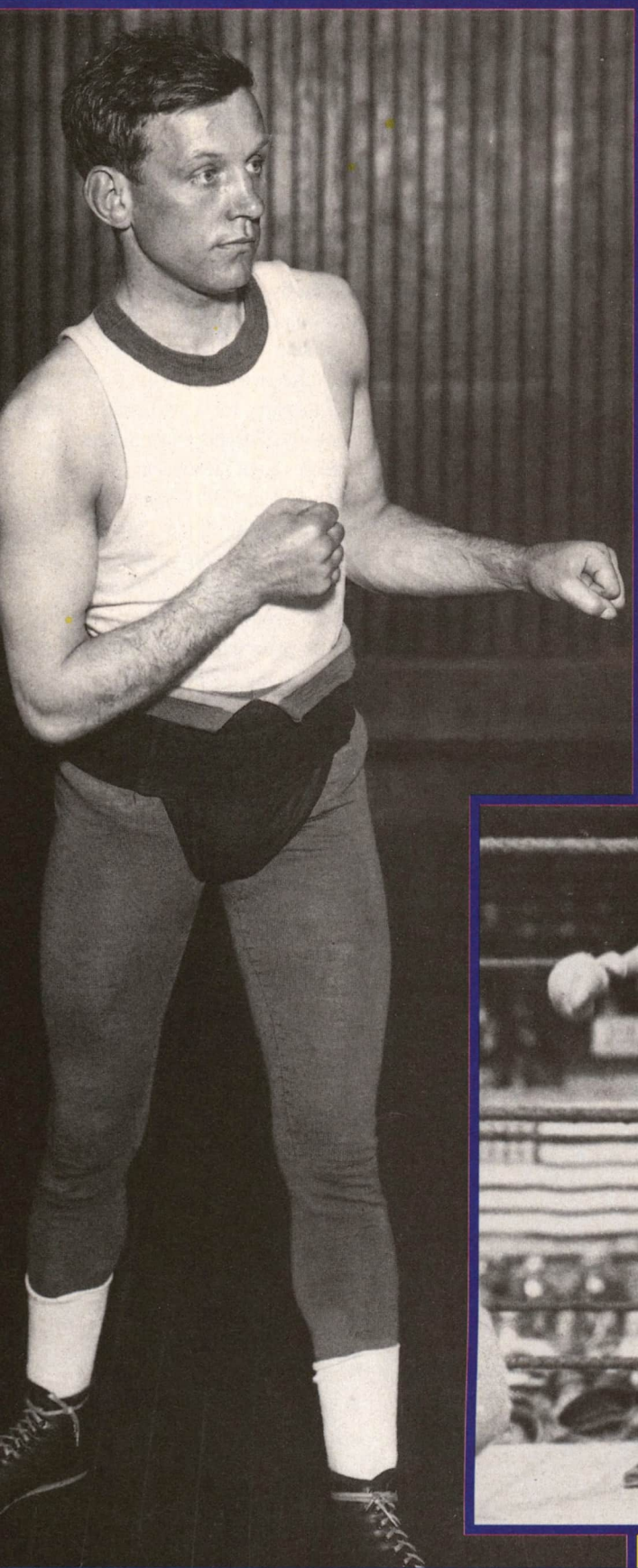
Style matchup: The broad shouldered, 5'1" Villa was a tireless battler who would dart in and out on quick feet, throwing volleys of punches. The 5'5" Lynch was also busy and aggressive, making openings with his jab and peeling off stiff combinations. His right cross was particularly dangerous.

Outcome: They set a frenetic pace with Villa pressing the action at close quarters and Lynch doing his best work at longer range. The Filipino is the stronger man, but the Scotsman has the edge in defensive skill and one-punch power. They battle without breath until the final bell, with no knockdowns. Lynch wins a unanimous decision.



Villa (right) sizes up Buff

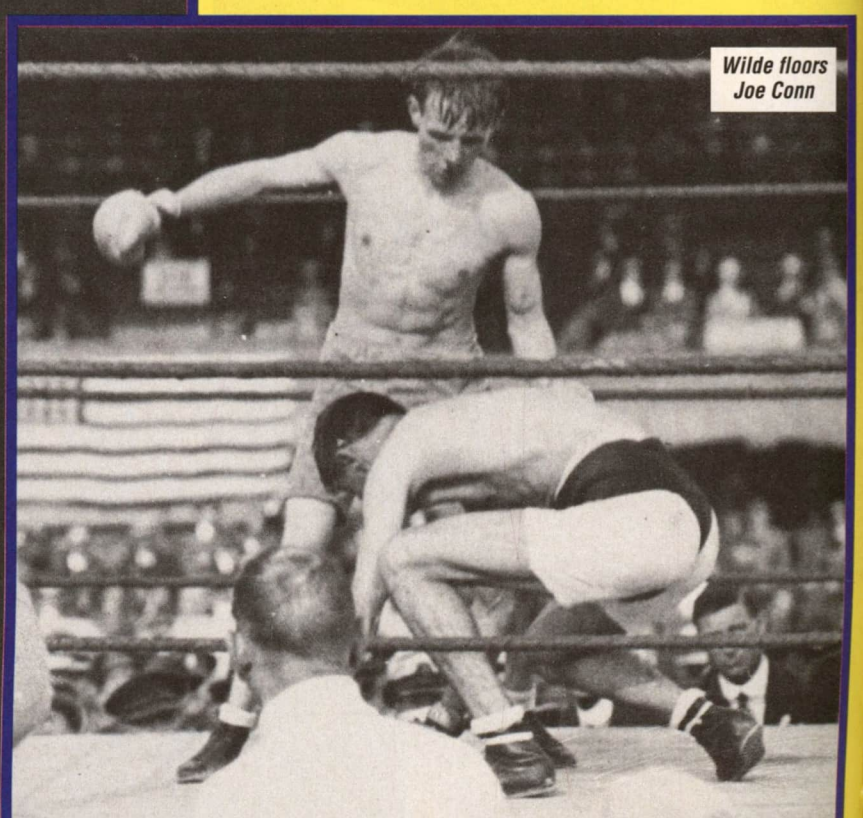
JIMMY WILDE VS.



Wilde's strengths: They used to call him "the ghost with a hammer in his hand" because he was virtually impossible to hit at his best and punched with remarkable ferocity for such a small man. His skill in avoiding punches was matched by his accuracy and timing in delivering them, and he was as tough and courageous as they come. In addition to around 500 booth fights, he had 149 professional fights, losing just one of his first 146 (later avenged). His only other losses came against bantamweight champion Pete Herman, who outweighed him by 13 pounds, and Pancho Villa, following over two years' inactivity. He won the world title knocking out Young Zulu Kid in 1916. Among those he went on to beat was future bantamweight champion Joe Lynch. His 99 knockouts were good for a 66.4 kayo percent.

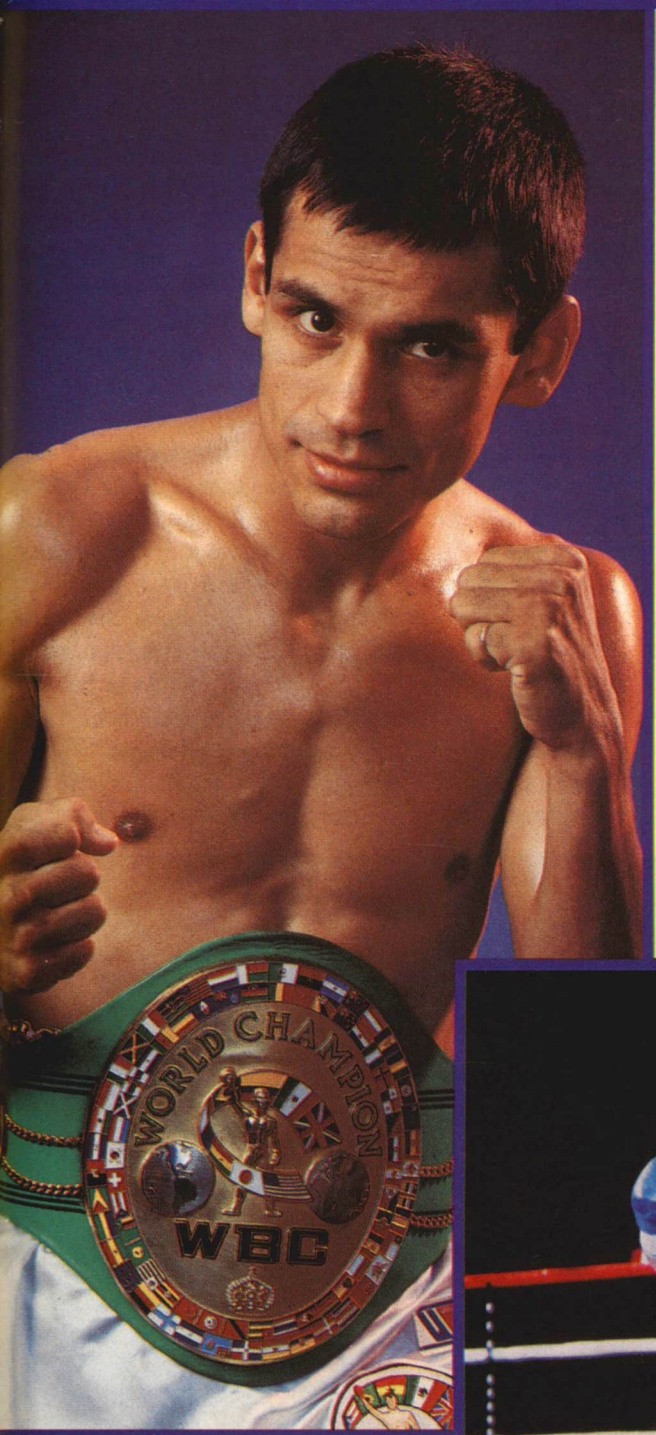
Wilde's weaknesses: His size was a disadvantage, as illustrated in three stoppage losses to heavier men. In his 1915-'19 prime, he often weighed under 100 pounds, but mitigated this disadvantage by regularly insisting on opponents coming in well under the limit.

Lopez' strengths: "El Finito" went undefeated in 51 pro fights, with one technical-decision draw, scoring 37 knockouts, 72.5 percent. He had it all: jolting jab, fearsome body attack, huge left hook and right cross, sublime defensive



Wilde floors Joe Conn

RICARDO LOPEZ

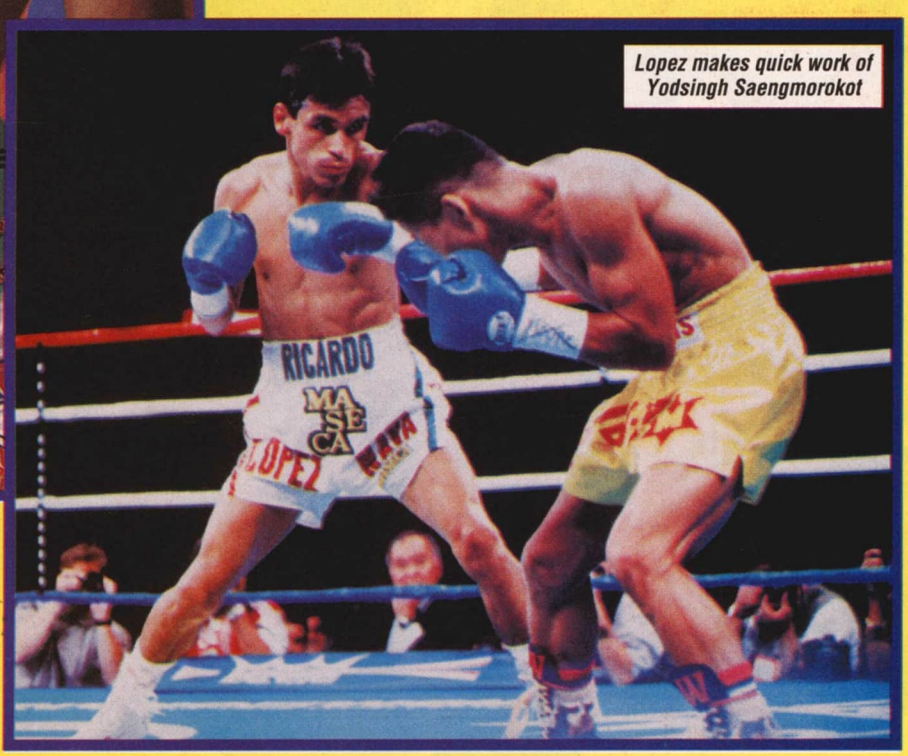


skills, beautiful footwork, unerring accuracy, reflexes, and timing. He also took a good shot (only dropped once). Ferdie Pacheco called him a "master of ring generalship." Lopez won the WBC 105-pound title in 1990 and defended it 21 times, 16 via knockout. His only blemish was the seven-round draw against WBA titleholder Rosendo Alvarez (accidental cut), whom he outboxed in the return. Won the IBF junior flyweight title relatively late in his career, and defended it twice. Fought 26 title fights overall.

Lopez' weaknesses: The aggressive Alvarez dropped Lopez with a right in their first fight and held him to a split decision in the return (when Alvarez outweighed him by five pounds). Lopez was affected by cuts late in his career.

Style matchup: The 5'2" Wilde was an attacking boxer-fighter, who moved in and out throwing heavy punches. He made openings with his jab, and his right cross was particularly dangerous. The 5'5" Lopez kept his hands high while stabbing out his stiff jab. He picked his punches, feinting to make openings and countering his opponent's lead, often landing three-punch combinations or double left hooks.

Outcome: Lopez, who has an eight-pound weight advantage, is surprised by the power of his tiny opponent, who cuts him and then drops him with a right cross in round four. A more cautious Lopez then uses his counterpunching to weaken the Welshman. The end comes in round 11 when Wilde is poleaxed by a left hook. He rises bravely, but the Mexican drills him with heavy punches until the referee waves it off.



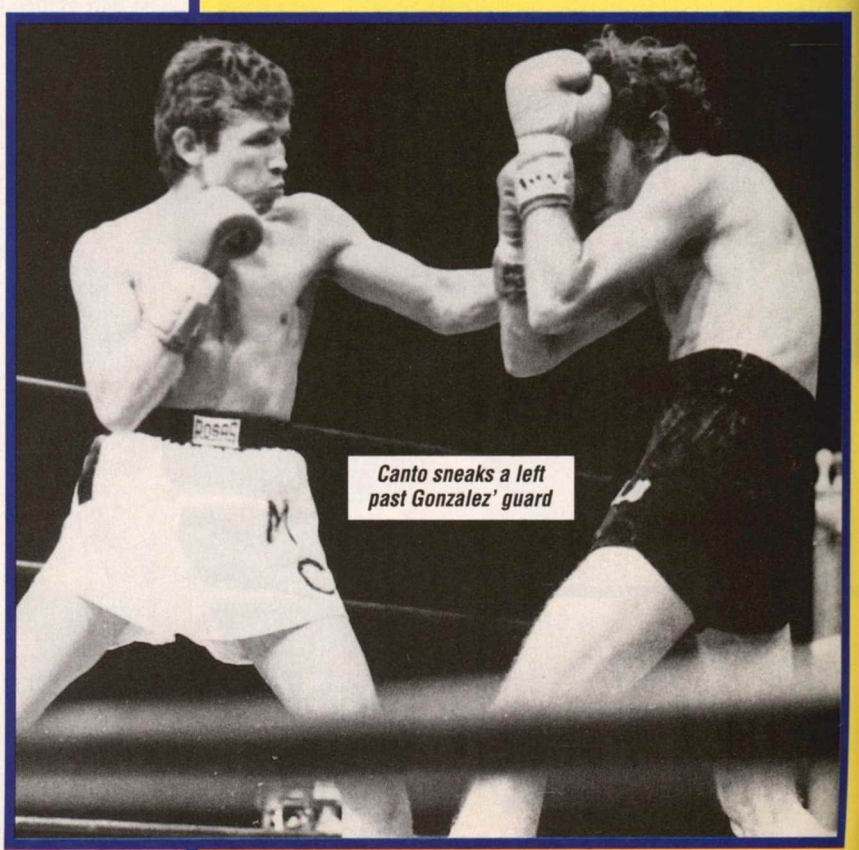
Lopez makes quick work of Yodsingh Saengmorokot

MIGUEL CANTO VS

Canto's strengths: He was a slippery defensive specialist who maintained a high rate of accurate punches. He had one of the finest jabs in recent history and a reliable chin. He had a 51-fight stretch when his only loss came via majority decision against WBC titleholder Betulio Gonzalez. Won the WBC title beating Shoji Oguma and defended it 14 times over four years, including two wins over Gonzalez, before losing it to Chan-Hee Park in Korea. He was considered unlucky to only get a draw in the return. Most of his title fights took place in his opponents' backyards.

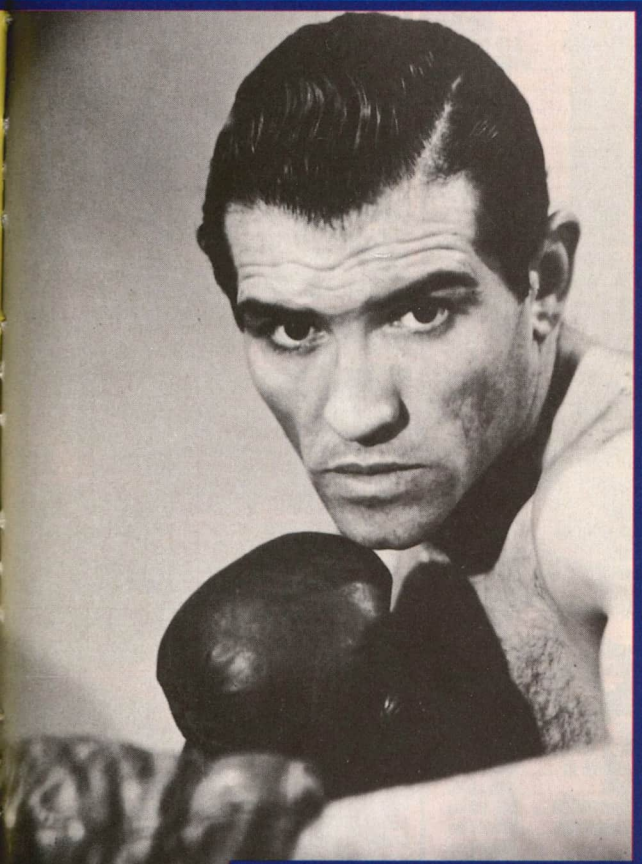
Canto's weaknesses: The 5'1" Mexican was a light puncher. He had a 20.3 percent stoppage ratio, and he won only one of his 18 title fights inside the distance. Some victories were extremely close, with six of his title wins coming on split or majority decisions, including two out of three against Oguma and both against Gonzalez.

Perez' strengths: He was one of the hardest punchers in flyweight history, carrying remarkable power in his muscular arms (57 knockouts in 92 fights, 62 percent). As he put it: "I just can't throw a punch unless it has enough behind it to score a knockout." He was also a fine counterpuncher, who was able to shift the angles and pace of his attack. After winning Olympic gold, he won his first 18 fights by knockout and



Canto sneaks a left past Gonzalez' guard

PASCUAL PEREZ

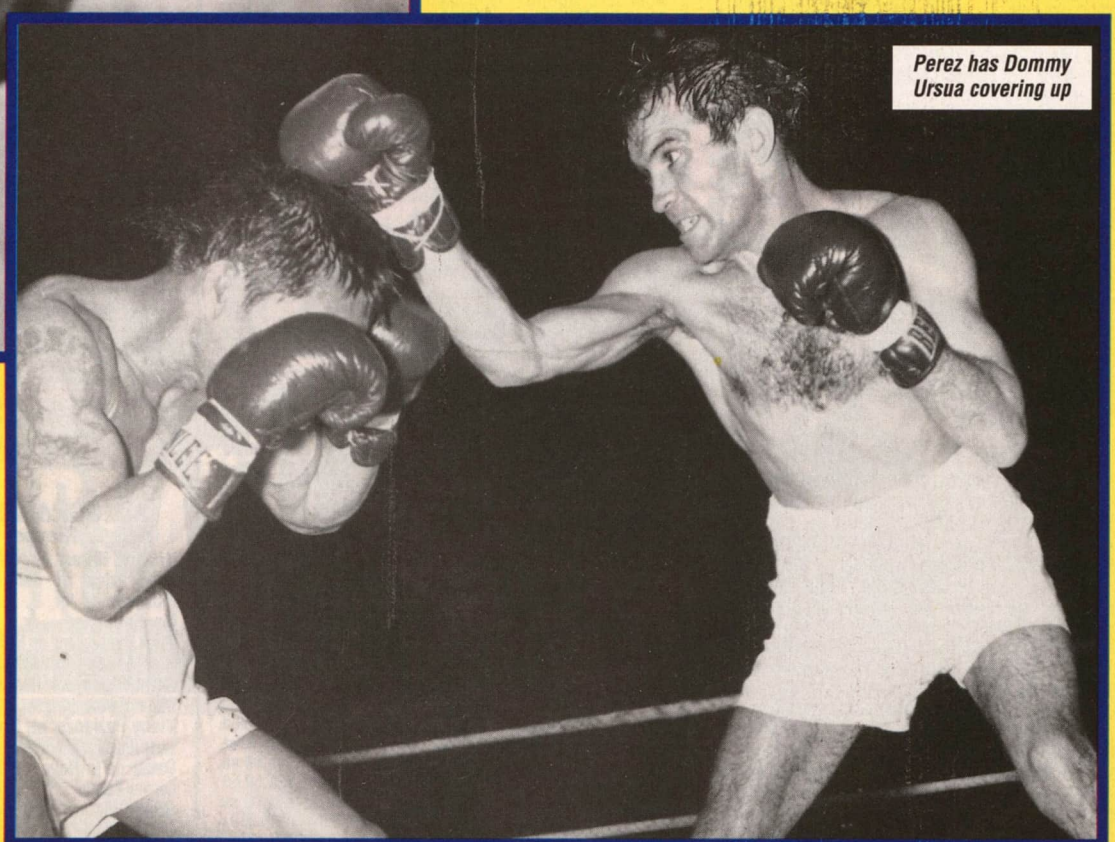


went unbeaten in his first 52. He won the world title by outpointing Yoshio Shirai in Japan in 1954 and defended it nine times over the next 5 1/2 years. His only defeat in this period came against Japan's Sadao Yaoita in a non-title fight, avenged on a knockout in the return. He lost his title on a split decision to Pone Kingpetch when he was almost 34.

Perez' weaknesses: He stood just 4'11" and weighed as little as 105 pounds. He was occasionally outboxed by taller, quicker boxers. Yaoita used his movement to outbox Perez in their first fight, and dropped him with a body blow in the return. Kingpetch used his nine-inch height advantage to outjab Perez in their first fight and then easily stopped him in the return.

Style matchup: Perez would slip underneath punches to land heavy hooks to the body and hard combinations to the head. Canto based his attack around his sharp, accurate jab and would throw clusters of punchers, mainly from middle range.

Outcome: Canto uses lots of lateral movement and a high volume of punches to pick up the points, but by round five the Argentinean is into his stride, working his way under the jab to belt the body. In round nine, he drops the Mexican with a left hook to the jaw. The final third of the fight is nip and tuck the whole way, but Perez' significant advantage in punching power makes the difference and he wins a split decision.



Perez has Dommy Ursua covering up

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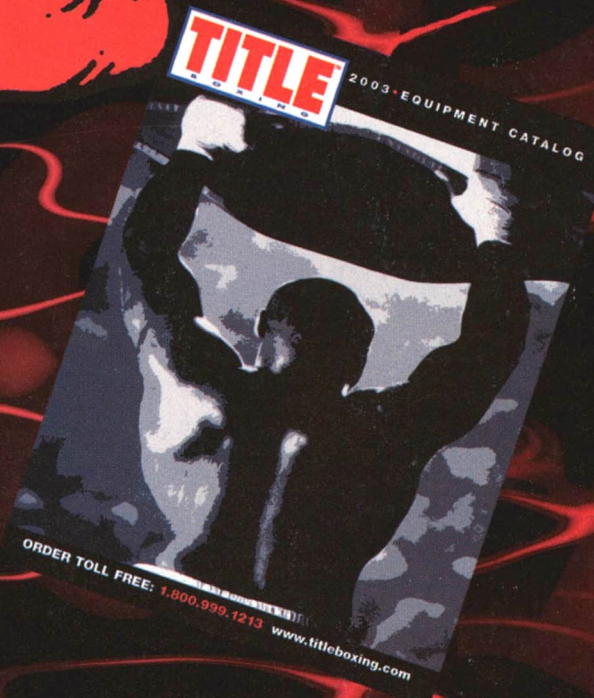

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